

# **SIERRA VALLEY MEMORIES**

## **WITH ARTIE STRANG, FRANK DOTTA**

### **AND RITA BRADLEY**

Interviewee: Artie Strang, Frank Dotta, Rita Bradley

Interviewed: 1989

Published: 1990

Interviewer: R. T. King

UNOHP Catalog #155

#### **Description**

For almost 150 years life in California's Sierra Valley has been substantially tied to family ranching enterprises, and to exploitation of the forests that rim the valley. When change occurred, it was generally evolutionary and driven by technological developments in the service of agriculture, logging or transportation. In 1988 Sierra Valley appeared to be poised at the brink of a social and economic transformation that could erase many traces of its agrarian, pastoral history.

Through this volume of oral histories the reader glimpses a way of life, and relationships with the land and with neighbors, that may soon pass. Each of the contributors—Rita Bradley, Frank Dotta and Artie Strang—is descended from early settlers of the valley; all were born before the First World War and have lived in Sierra Valley most of their lives. The book is arranged in two parts, the first containing memories and stories of Sierra Valley ranch life, and the second offering some observations about the relationship between the Forest Service and the valley residents. From these pages the reader will gain some understanding of the Swiss-Italian heritage of many of the valley's inhabitants; the valley-wide evolution of dairy operations into beef ranches; some specific examples of the effects of catastrophic fire and diminishing water supplies; a discussion on how state and federal agencies have tried to manage natural resources around Sierra Valley in this century, and the perceived effects of such management on the residents; and evocative descriptions of a passing way of life that is remembered as being financially unprofitable, yet peaceful, uncomplicated, and rewarding in ways that cannot be quantified.



**SIERRA VALLEY MEMORIES**  
**WITH ARTIE STRANG, FRANK DOTTA**  
**AND RITA BRADLEY**

---



**SIERRA VALLEY MEMORIES  
WITH ARTIE STRANG, FRANK DOTTA  
AND RITA BRADLEY**

PRODUCTION OF SIERRA VALLEY MEMORIES  
WAS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE  
USDA FOREST SERVICE, TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST

An Oral History Conducted by R. T. King  
Edited by Helen M. Blue and R. T. King

University of Nevada Oral History Program

Copyright 1990  
University of Nevada Oral History Program  
Mail Stop 0324  
Reno, Nevada 89557  
unohp@unr.edu  
<http://www.unr.edu/oralhistory>

All rights reserved. Published 1990.  
Printed in the United States of America

Publication Staff:  
Director: R. T. King  
Program Coordinator/Editor: Helen M. Blue  
Text Production: Verne Foster,  
Linda J. Sommer and Kay M. Stone

### **University of Nevada Oral History Program Use Policy**

All UNOHP interviews are copyrighted materials. They may be downloaded and/or printed for personal reference and educational use, but not republished or sold. Under “fair use” standards, excerpts of up to 1000 words may be quoted for publication without UNOHP permission as long as the use is non-commercial and materials are properly cited. The citation should include the title of the work, the name of the person or people interviewed, the date of publication or production, and the fact that the work was published or produced by the University of Nevada Oral History Program (and collaborating institutions, when applicable). Requests for permission to quote for other publication, or to use any photos found within the transcripts, should be addressed to the UNOHP, Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0324. Original recordings of most UNOHP interviews are available for research purposes upon request.

---

## CONTENTS

Preface to the Digital Edition	ix
Original Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii
1. Life in the Valley: Artie Strang	1
2. Life in the Valley: Frank Dotta	17
3. Life in the Valley: Rita Bradley	31
4. The Forest Service and the Valley: Artie Strang	37
5. The Forest Service and the Valley: Frank Dotta	43
6. The Forest Service and the Valley: Rita Bradley	47
Original Index: For Reference Only	49



---

## PREFACE TO THE DIGITAL EDITION

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, most have been reformatted, a process that was completed in 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

Alicia Barber  
Director, UNOHP  
July 2012

---

## ORIGINAL PREFACE

Since 1965 the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) has produced over 200 works similar to the one at hand. Following the precedent established by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948 (and perpetuated since by academic programs such as ours throughout the English-speaking world) these manuscripts are called oral histories. Unfortunately, some confusion surrounds the meaning of the term. To the extent that these 'oral' histories can be read, they are not oral, and while they are useful historical sources, they are not themselves history. Still, custom is a powerful force; historical and cultural records that originate in tape-recorded interviews are almost uniformly labeled 'oral histories', and our program follows that usage.

Among oral history programs, differences abound in the way information is collected, processed and presented. At one end of a spectrum are some that claim to find scholarly value in interviews which more closely resemble spontaneous encounters than they do organized efforts to collect

information. For those programs, any preparation is too much. The interviewer operates the recording equipment and serves as the immediate audience, but does not actively participate beyond encouraging the chronicler to keep talking. Serendipity is the principal determinant of the historical worth of information thus collected.

The University of Nevada's program strives to be considerably more rigorous in selecting chroniclers, and in preparing for and focussing interviews. When done by the UNOHP, these firsthand accounts are meant to serve the function of primary source documents, as valuable in the process of historiography as the written records with which historians customarily work. However, while the properly conducted oral history is a reliable source, verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the UNOHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, and that the chronicler has approved the edited manuscript, but it

does not assert that all are entirely free of error. Accordingly, our oral histories should be approached with the same caution that the prudent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries and other sources of historical information.

Each finished manuscript is the product of a collaboration—its structure influenced by the directed questioning of an informed, well-prepared interviewer, and its articulation refined through editing. While the words in these published oral histories are essentially those of Mr. Strang, Mr. Dotta, and Mrs. Bradley, the text is not a *verbatim* transcription of the interviews as they occurred. In producing a manuscript, it is the practice of the UNOHP to employ the language of the chronicler, but to edit for clarity and readability. By shifting text when necessary, by polishing syntax, and by deleting or subsuming the questions of the interviewer, a first-person narrative with chronological and topical order is created. Mr. Strang, Mr. Dotta, and Mrs. Bradley have reviewed the finished manuscripts of their oral histories and affirmed in writing that they are an accurate representation of their statements.

The UNOHP realizes that there will be some researchers who prefer to take their oral history straight, without the editing that was necessary to produce this text; they are directed to the tape recording. Copies of all or part of this work and the tapes from which it is derived are available from:

The University of Nevada  
Oral History Program  
Mailstop 0324  
University of Nevada, Reno 89557  
775/784-6932

---

## INTRODUCTION

This volume of recollections of life in Sierra Valley is modeled on earlier work. In 1983-1984, aided by a grant from the National Park Service, the University of Nevada, Reno Oral History Program (UNOHP) conducted a historical and archaeological survey of Carson Valley, the location of the first settlements in Nevada. The principal research method employed for that project was somewhat innovative: information obtained through systematic oral history interviewing was used not only to build a historical record of life in the valley, but also to discover or interpret sites and artifacts of human occupation and enterprise.

Our methodology proved successful, and a vigorous symbiotic relationship developed between the historical and archaeological components of the project. As anticipated, social and economic history emerged through the oral histories, some of which also led directly to the discovery of previously unrecorded archaeological sites. The oral histories established context and facilitated description and analysis of the sites; in return, archaeological findings helped shape the

historical research, and provided a means for verification of the oral history testimony. The project resulted in eleven volumes of oral histories, an archaeological site survey, a technical report published by the Desert Research Institute, and forty hours of video documentation.

In 1988 it appeared that there might be an opportunity to develop a similar project in California's Sierra Valley. Meredith Rucks, who was then the Sierraville Ranger District Archaeologist, was conducting research into historic use of the National Forest lands contiguous to the valley. When she learned of the work we had done in Carson Valley, Ms. Rucks observed that the methodology used could be applied with equal success in the Sierra Valley region.

For almost 150 years life in Sierra Valley has been substantially tied to family ranching enterprises, and to exploitation of the forests that rim the valley. When change occurred, it was generally evolutionary and driven by technological developments in the service of agriculture, logging or transportation. In

1988 Sierra Valley appeared to be poised at the brink of a social and economic transformation that could erase many traces of its agrarian, pastoral history.

Ms. Rucks suggested that the Forest Service might be receptive to a grant proposal to support a historical and archaeological survey of Sierra Valley. Since it was the middle of the fiscal year and budgetary constraints made it unlikely that a substantial grant would be awarded, I decided to seek only sufficient funds to launch a pilot project. In 1989, UNOHP was awarded a \$1500 grant from the United States Forest Service. Work commenced, with Ms. Rucks providing considerable assistance. We intended the pilot exercise to include only a limited amount of oral history interviewing and preliminary research. However, if a comprehensive survey seemed feasible and funding forthcoming, we meant to continue with an effort to develop as clear an understanding as possible of the history of Sierra Valley. Through oral history we would examine the causes and effects of settlement and growth; the roles of various ethnic groups; the complex relationship among humans, their agricultural and livestock enterprises, and the natural environment that supported them; and the uses by Sierra Valley inhabitants of the bordering upland forests. The presence of the United States Forest Service in and around the valley was to be given attention, and, through oral history interviewing, we also intended to locate and interpret historic and prehistoric archaeological sites both on and off Forest Service land. It was an ambitious project that we planned—one that might take several years and many thousands of dollars to complete.

This volume of oral histories is the chief product of our pilot project. Through it the reader glimpses a way of life, and relationships with the land and with neighbors, that may

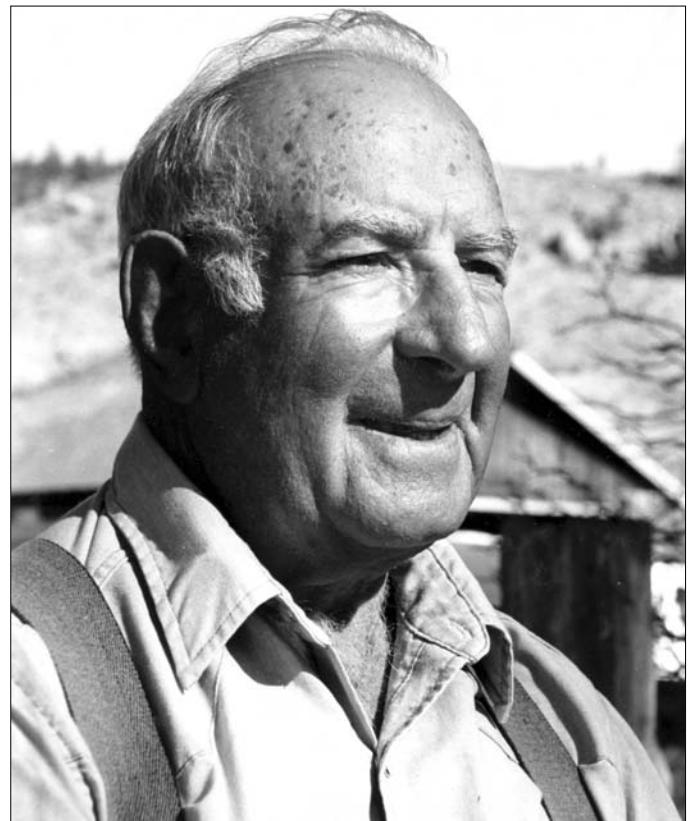
soon pass. Each of the contributors—Rita Bradley, Frank Dotta and Artie Strang—is descended from early settlers of the valley; all were born before the First World War and have lived in Sierra Valley most of their lives. The book is arranged in two parts, the first containing memories and stories of Sierra Valley ranch life, and the second offering some observations about the relationship between the Forest Service and valley residents. From these pages the reader will gain some understanding of the Swiss-Italian heritage of many of the valley's inhabitants; the valley-wide evolution of dairy operations into beef ranches; some specific examples of the effects of catastrophic fire and diminishing water supplies; a discussion of how state and federal agencies have tried to manage natural resources around Sierra Valley in this century, and the perceived effects of such management on the residents; and evocative descriptions of a passing way of life that is remembered as being financially unprofitable, yet peaceful, uncomplicated, and rewarding in ways that cannot be quantified.

Unfortunately, the successful and highly encouraging pilot effort represented by this volume has not led to the extended research that we hoped it would. Ms. Rucks, the principal source of Forest Service enthusiasm for the endeavor, transferred to the Lake Tahoe Management Unit; federal funding for such projects became scarcer as the nation edged toward an economic recession; and the UNOHP's energies were absorbed by other commitments. This is work that ought to be done in greater depth, and I hope that a person or organization with the necessary resources and expertise will yet take it on.

R. T. King  
University of Nevada, Reno  
1990



ARTIE STRANG



FRANK DOTTA



RITA BRADLEY

Photographs by R.T. King

---

## LIFE IN THE VALLEY: ARTIE STRANG

On my mother's side, our family history starts back at the Revolutionary War with Lafayette. When he came to aid Washington in the war, he had an aide-de-camp by the name of Barnett. When the war was over, Barnett went down to Louisiana or somewhere and took up land, and his descendents worked their way up the river. My mother's grandfather Mays had a big plantation in Maysville, Missouri. He said they had 150 slaves; they raised cotton, hogs, and cattle. In the wintertime, the colored women slaves picked the seeds out of the cotton, and the big buck men slaves worked on a horizontal treadmill that made the power for them to spin the cotton into rope. My great-grandfather sold the cotton in his store in Maysville. He stood six-foot-six and weighed 360 pounds. He was a very large man and had red curly hair.

After the Civil War there was nothing left, so my grandmother married my grandfather, Louis Stewart, who came from Indiana. All I know about him is that he came to Sierra Valley in a covered wagon, and left his wife

in Missouri. Then he went back and got his wife and brought her out. The first job he had here was working for my grandfather Strang digging a ditch in 1872. But that wasn't more than a summer's work.

When my grandfather and grandmother Stewart lived in Sierraville, she wanted a ranch, but he wouldn't go for it; he just didn't want it at all. They had eight children, and one drowned when he was seven years old. She raised all the rest of those kids by the sewing machine. My grandmother was quite a seamstress, and she could make pants, shirts—*anything*—and she sold them. (People would order the clothing; she didn't sell door-to-door.)

I think my grandfather's main occupation was as a bartender in one of the saloons around here. He was also a cobbler. People would bring their shoes to him to repair in his home. I was twelve years old when my grandfather Stewart died in 1915.

On my father's side, I have a genealogy tracing my family back to John and Priscilla Alden of the *Mayflower*. I think the genealogy

started back in Maine, because my father's mother was raised in Augusta. Starting with them, each family marriage was copied on a great big long record. Our genealogy is traced right until my wife and me. I think from here it's going to die, because no one else wants to keep it going.

On my father's side, my great-grandfather, Nathaniel Strang, had three brothers. Before the Revolutionary War, two of them turned Tories and were given vast amounts of timberland on Prince Edward Island, never to be taxed. The other two fought for the colonies, and after the war was over, my great-grandfather went back and went in business with his brothers.

My grandfather, Jared, was the youngest of ten children. When his mother died, they moved to Duxbury, Massachusetts. He was ten years old. My grandfather grew up there and went to school. Later he fished for codfish for three years off of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. That was a big-paying job, and he made good money.

My great-grandfather came to California in 1856 and my grandfather followed him two years later. They had decided to come to California because of the Gold Rush. Neither of them had any success at finding gold. My great-grandfather didn't bring his family with him when he came here. When he arrived, he and Beckwourth were here at the same time.<sup>1</sup> But by the time my grandfather arrived in 1858, Beckwourth was gone.

My grandfather had quite a bit of money when he originally landed in San Francisco. Since he didn't have any luck at mining, he bought a pack train with which he packed food and hay from Sierra Valley into Downieville. They used to bring the freight and stuff to Marysville on boat, and then my grandfather's pack train brought it up to Downieville to the mining camp. If anyone wanted to go from

Downieville to Virginia City, my grandfather packed them to Virginia City. That was the only mode of transportation to this country up until 1870, I think, when they put a wagon road in. I don't know for how long my grandfather ran the pack train. The only thing I heard him restate many times was that he crossed the little Truckee River in Reno where the Riverside Hotel sits now. He crossed the river on foot and didn't get his feet wet. There was one log cabin there—the only building in Reno.

In 1859, my grandfather came back to Sierra Valley. Back then, the grass was high in these meadows. He and some other men went up to the upper end of the valley and turned the water off of the meadows where they could by putting a stone dam in Hamlin Creek. My grandfather hired seven men with scythes, and they raked the hay. When they were done, they tore the dam out. They put the hay on a stone boat and dragged it up and baled it with what they used to call a dead-fall hay press. During this process, they'd go up a tree and they'd make a mortise. Then they'd put this tenon up in that mortise and lock and pin it in there and make a box. Then they'd raise this dead-fall arm up and brace it by putting a stick under it. They'd press enough hay in there to make a 150-pound bale. That was the load for a pack mule. Then they packed the hay to Downieville, where my grandfather had his headquarters.

---

1. Sierra Valley, once called Beckwourth's Valley, was entered by the explorer James P. Beckwourth through a low pass at its northeastern corner in 1851. The following year Beckwourth guided an immigrant wagon train along a route through the pass and across the valley, and then established a trading post there.

After his return to Sierra Valley, my grandfather homesteaded the land. He took the land up with a preemption and my great-grandfather took up the homestead. In the 1860s, my grandfather went around to all the people in the valley and agreed to take their cattle out on the desert for two dollars a head for the winter. There were about two thousand head of cattle in the valley then, and he hired Indians to help herd them. (They might have been Washo Indians.) The winter range ran south to Steamboat Springs, north to Surprise Valley, and east to Winnemucca. Then in the spring he brought the cattle back into Sierra Valley, and that's the way he got into the cattle business.

The cattle business then was all one great big community range; none of it was fenced at that time. When he took up these cattle, Grandfather hired men and riders—he used to say *vaqueros*.<sup>2</sup> They took the cattle out on to the desert, and they brought them back to Sierra Valley. I've heard my grandfather say many times that they could turn *five hundred* head of steers down there on the middle of the valley. He said the wild rye and bunch grass and clover would be so high you couldn't see the steers—all you'd see was the men on horseback.

Back then, they'd have these great big rodeos where they'd brand cattle. Two men would get in there and work the cattle out. Then when they got everybody's cattle worked out, the roundup was all done and they had a great big barbecue and everybody went home. As near as I can tell, the early cattle were mostly Mexican, because I remember my grandfather telling stories about when they used to load the cattle out in Truckee in the cars, the steers had such big horns they had to turn sideways to get in the car. [laughter] Of course, they've improved since then.

This valley couldn't supply Downieville and all these mines around here with enough

meat, so my grandfather used to take a bunch of men and go up to Oregon and Idaho and buy cattle and trail them all the way down here. He'd make two drives a year. He'd get there in early spring and buy and they'd trail them down here; then he'd put them here on the ranch, and they'd take them out to the mining camps and kill them. Then when they needed more cattle, they went up there and got more. I don't know how long that went on, but I don't think it went for more than five years.

There are two stories they tell about my grandfather's hair. One time he was going up into Oregon to buy cattle with some men. They were on horses and they had the gold in the buckboard to buy the cattle with. The Indians took after them, but they outran them. They said the next morning when Grandfather got up, his hair was white...but I don't believe that. The other story told was that his hair was white because he had to sit so long and often in the cold, damp churches back in New England. He had hair that was white as long as I can remember.

My grandfather had a foreman named Henry Conger, but Grandfather did everything else. He went all over the country; he'd go up to Oregon and Idaho and down to San Francisco and around. Then when the railroad built into Truckee in 1868, he shipped cattle on the railroad. He *was* a big shot.

My grandfather and a man by the name of Hamlin and another fellow named Flint homesteaded some land in a partnership. Hamlin homesteaded the springs in Buffalo Meadows, which is a big place out east of Susanville; my grandfather homesteaded Painter Flat; Flint homesteaded in Smoke

---

2. The term "buckaroo" derives from the Spanish *vaquero*, meaning cowboy.

Creek. Painter Flat is about thirty-five miles east of that big mud flat near Highway 395 on the way to Alturas. I heard my grandfather say many times that all they ever counted was the cows, and they had five thousand head of cows. They went up on the hills north of Susanville in the summer, and then they'd gradually work their way right back out onto the desert.

My grandfather's partnership with Hamlin and Flint broke up. I'm not sure when this happened, but they had a lot of cattle out there. When Hamlin had to settle, they agreed to disagree, and they had a lawsuit. My grandfather came out of it with about fifteen thousand dollars, a nice sum of money back then.

Grandfather wasn't really the best businessman in the world. He could buy things, but he didn't pay a whole lot of attention to where the money went. So he had a man by the name of Quigley who kept his books for him, and Quigley did a good job. Grandfather made three fortunes and lost them all. My father told me there was a fellow that went down to collect money that was owed to my grandfather off of the cattle. This fellow went around and collected all that money, and I guess it was quite a sum. That put the finishing touches to my grandfather for his last fortune.

My grandfather went into the dairy business in about 1880. When he went into the dairy business, he located the dairy here in Sierra Valley. I think him changing from the beef business to dairying was because his partnership broke up. He milked about fifty or sixty cows. There was a cooperative creamery right back about a quarter of a mile west of here; it was called the Sierra and Sattley Cooperative Creamery. My family had stocks and everything in it, but I guess the director didn't know how to do business and finally it

just folded up. The only thing that remains of that creamery is two great big cement piers that the engine stood on.

I've heard that my grandfather was quite a woodsman. I can take you down here in the field and show you a tree that's just a big stump about two feet in diameter that comes into a center. You can pour water right into it—he was that good of an axman. He wasn't a big giant of a man, but he could stand flat-footed and pick up a 150-pound bale off of the ground and put it up on his mule.

When my grandfather had the dairy, people from Sierra Valley quit taking their cattle out on those meadows on the little Truckee River. Then the dairymen from Folsom took their cattle there and they had to take them to Sardine Valley and all along that river, clear up along the meadows at Webber Lake up there, a distance of about sixty miles. You see, the feed had dried up down around Folsom, so they'd come up here and trail their cows. Then they'd drive their cattle back down to Folsom again after the feed went back. They did the same thing up at Tahoe City and over at the upper end of the lake. So they all came into the lower valley. I don't know; maybe they crowded the natives out.

I don't know when my grandfather built his house. The home used to be down on the creek, and the winters are so rough there. (During the hard winter of 1889 and 1890, there was ten feet of snow here in the valley.) My grandfather's first wife died, and when he got married the second time, they moved up to where the ranch is now up here on the hill. But his first family couldn't get along with the second family, and the second family couldn't get along with the first family, so they all split up and left.

About 1900, around when I was born, my grandfather just simply quit everything. He didn't give a darn whether he ranched or

did anything at all or not. Then my father and uncle took it over and started managing it when my father was eighteen years old. At that time they only had five hundred acres. My grandfather stayed around here at the ranch after my dad took over, but my mother and my grandmother couldn't get along, so my grandparents moved to Sierraville. What his income was after that I don't know.

Before my father actually took over, he had been working on the ranch and dairy. When his dad's partnership dissolved, my father went up to Lewis Mill and worked for a while. Lewis Mill is in a canyon near Loyalton that goes up Smithneck Creek. One of his brothers went to work in the store over in Sierraville; one of the half-brothers went to work on the railroad; the other half-brother went up north and went to work as a cowboy; and I don't know what the other half-brother did. Then there was a sister who went down to a school down at Round Dutch Flat, and then she got married.

When my grandfather and other settlers first came here, they grew a lot of grain. A lot of this land was all virgin soil covered with bunch grass, timothy hay, clover, and native wild rye. There were two grasses that grew in Sierra Valley, but not to any commercial extent—native bunch grass and clover. They grew at the foot of the canyon past Sierraville out by that ranch. If the bunch grass and clover was put up at the right time, that was a wonderful cattle feed. They said they were just too fat to need to eat anything else but that, believe it or not. There was a story that I heard my grandfather tell: He used to buy and sell cattle, and he shipped some cattle down to a slaughterhouse in San Francisco. He had a couple of those cattle that had been grazing the bunch grass and clover there. The people at the slaughterhouse were astonished

at the cattle that were fattened like that. They wanted to see where those cattle were raised and what they were fed, so they came up from San Francisco to take a look. That area where they were fed isn't that good now, but there's still some of it. There's also some of what they call buffalo grass.

When people started coming into the valley, the southern end was taken up by a bunch of New Englanders, and the middle of the valley was taken up by a bunch of old country Irish. When the New Englanders came into this end of the valley, they brought dairy operations along with them, and all these little dairies were started in the area. At that time there was a good market for butter, though there was very little cheese ever made that I know of. They took butter to Downieville to the mines, and my dad took some butter clear down to North Bloomfield, which is a long way from here. They also used to take it to Virginia City. That was their summer's work. They had their butter to sell, they had the buttermilk to feed the hogs and skim milk to feed their calves. That's the way they ran their business. There wasn't a whole lot of money in it, and it was a lot of darned hard work.

With the advent of the dairy business, the Swiss came in to the valley as milkers. They had a chance to buy up some ranches, and they went back to the old country and brought their relatives in here to help them. The Swiss made only enough cheese for themselves. Maybe a couple of them marketed cheese, but not on a big scale. Cheese was never made commercially until this old creamery over here was built. When that blew up, there was a creamery in Beckwourth, a creamery in Loyalton, and a creamery in Sierraville. My dad had stocks in the creamery in Loyalton.

A man named Leichty had a cooper shop in Sierraville. He'd go out into the woods and fell white firs, split them out, and then he'd make firkins. They'd be about sixteen inches on the bottom and went up to about twelve inches on the top, and they had galvanized hoops on them. One time I was with my grandfather when he went down there to get kegs and bring them over here. In the cooper shop, I saw Mr. Leichty making a firkin. The hoops were little pieces of galvanized iron, about three-sixteenths of an inch wide, and they riveted them very nicely. They had to put the wood in there and they'd pound those hoops down. They'd put the stays against the hoop and then hold another thing here and hit it with a hammer to drive the hoop down. That tool could be used on any kind of a keg. Dan and his son, George, made everything. (The little cooper shop is still up there on the creek. It goes back in time as far as I can remember, but it wasn't his first one.)

They'd put butter in those casks and stomp it all in; then they'd leave about a spare inch on top of it and they'd put the lid in, which had a hole in the middle of it. Then they made a brine so strong that it would float an egg. They'd pour that all around on top until it went down into the butter to improve it.

At the upper end of Sierraville, some men went in and dug a ditch and put in a gristmill. It was right up at Randolph (at that time, the town was called Etta), a mile above Sierraville. The gristmill worked until finally the ground got so darn poor. It was a very poor soil to begin with, and then the wheat disappeared and the gristmill shut down. But I can remember it from when I was a kid, sitting up there on the hill.

When the gristmill shut down, a man by the name of Dave White took that water and he made it into a water wheel. (Dave White was Ed White's father; their family ran White

Garage in Loyalton.) Dave White had the water wheel running a sawmill, and then he had a little extra power with steam. But the sawmill burned down in 1910.

After that, they started the Randolph Water Company with that ditch of water. There were about sixteen families involved in that. Here's the funny thing: out of those sixteen families using that water in the corporation, there were over sixteen or eighteen of them that lived to be way over eighty years old. Every once in a while they'd pull a dead horse or a dead cow or something out of that ditch, but none of the families ever got typhoid. Today, it's against the law for a man to take a drink of water out of an open ditch. That's quite a story about that ditch of water.

I guess my dad was quite a high-toned guy when he was young, and he had a fancy top buggy—he paid ninety dollars for it. He had a damn nice horse and he went to these dances, and that's the way I think my dad and mother got together. He had all this show-off stuff. Just like everything, a fellow gets a brand-new car and pretty soon he gets the girls, and that's the end of him. You get captured. [laughter] So my father brought my mother to the ranch. I was born in the same room of the same house that my dad was born in.

After running the ranch for a while my dad and my uncle just *split up*! My dad bought my uncle's cattle out, bought his interest out, and then bought my grandfather's interest out. My father got the big idea that he didn't want a ranch any more, so he rented the ranch. One horse was all he had left, so he went around and took up some options on some ranches around here to sell as real estate. Then he went down to Oakland and was going to be a big real estate man. Well, he didn't sell any ranches. Since he had to live, he took the

family and went to work for one of his cousins in Oakland as a carpenter. He said he never worked so hard in his life. Then one of the real estate agents that he was working with told him, "If you know how to make a living on a ranch, you go back into ranching." He took the man's advice to come back, and returned to ranching. I was twelve years old when my dad started ranching again about 1914. He didn't have anything, so he had to borrow money. When he came back to the ranch, he felled timber for a sawmill up here; he worked there until that closed.

When my folks came back to the ranch, we picked up dairy cows and horses here and there to get started. We were doing pretty well. We had a small dairy, and he had a little field that was producing awful good timothy hay. He put up that hay in a big stack, and a stack was thirty tons. My father would bale that out and haul it over to the livery stables in Downieville, Sierraville, and Sierra City. Once when he was coming back, he ran off the end of a culvert and got thrown off the seat and went right down. The horses and wagon ran over him, and he was laid up practically all that winter. My brother also had an accident and he got an infection in the bone in his leg. That caused seizures all that winter, so finally we had to take him down to a specialist in Oakland. He was down there quite a while, and that was a big expense right when he was starting out. It took him quite a while to get better.

Shortly after we came back from Oakland in 1914, my father and two other fellows got a big idea that they'd go up in these high hills and trap marten. At that time, marten brought big money, so they went up there and we just barely existed—my father, mother, my brother, sister, and me. I even helped him set the traps for them. We trapped marten back on the high hills behind the ranch, where it

goes up there to eighty-six hundred feet. It was a heck of a climb on skis or snowshoes to get up there. My dad would bring the marten back down to clean. He had a packsack and he'd throw these marten in there and bring them down here and skin them, stretch them, and take care of them. It was an awful life. To hear him tell it, he made big money, but I know better.

My brother and I started trapping about 1916. We had about one hundred traps apiece. We used to trap coyotes, skunks, muskrat, bobcats, and mink around this valley. Once in a while we'd get a weasel. When I quit trapping, there weren't very many minks left in the country, but now they're getting thick again. We made pretty good money trapping. Where other boys earned thirty cents an hour, I was making a dollar an hour on the trap line. We sent all the pelts back east to sell.

My dad and another man by the name of Mike Ostinni were the only ones in the valley that trapped marten. Ostinni was born and raised in Switzerland. He was a Spanish-American War veteran, so he had a little pension, and trapping was his hobby. He trapped everything: marten; mink; bobcats; coyotes—everything like that. In fact, Ostinni went up in one of these little valleys up here in the hills, which is called Coburn Valley, and he built a log cabin up there as a trapping base. There was a tamarack tree and right on the other side of that about six feet was a little spring. He built a little shed back in there next to that spring, and that was one of his camps. He had a camp at Webber Lake; he had a camp at this little valley; he had another camp over in Lincoln Valley, and he would snowshoe clear back there.

Ostinni never had a family; he was an old bachelor. As you go into Sierraville, there's a restaurant on the corner; then there's a motel. Ostinni owned the home right back

of that, and he lived there for a long time. I don't know if his cabin in Coburn Valley is still standing. It's been years since I've been up there, but they say it's still there. It was either on Forest Service land or LP [Louisiana Pacific] land.

Ostinni was quite a man. He could tan hides; he could mount deer heads; he could make a buckskin. Those were his hobbies. But when he was a younger fellow, he used to milk. (I think that's how he got in this country—as a milker.) He also felled timber, and when my dad came back from Oakland, he felled timber with old Mike Ostinni for this little mill back here.

Later, in 1924, my dad decided he'd go up to Webber Lake and trap marten up there. We got a car and took the camping outfit and went to one of the cabins way up there at the meadow on the lake and stayed there. Another time we went up on horses. I set the first trap there and caught a marten. I told him, "I hope to God that I never get hungry enough that I have to trap marten for a living." That's what I thought of it.

All in all, my dad trapped marten for about twenty years. He wouldn't get more than ten pelts a year for which he got forty or fifty dollars apiece. They'd ship them back east to the fur buyers in Chicago and other places. (They'd throw out great big advertisements; then you'd ship them back there.) I sold a couple of pelts for him down in Sacramento one time. By the time my dad quit trapping marten, they were pretty scarce. You can't catch them anymore now.

A man named Albert Nichols had quite a bit of property and owned the ranch over where we first started our cattle out. They had a bunch of purebred Hereford cows and Shorthorn cows. Nichols bought and sold cattle; that was his business. He bought up

all these cattle and they'd feed them. In those days, they didn't feed cattle up to prime and choice and medium like they do today. They fed them until they got pretty good shape, but what they called fat then, they wouldn't today. Nichols's feedlot wasn't the only one in the valley; everybody fed a few steers. Church over here used to feed a couple of carloads, and the Dotta brothers would sometimes feed four or five cars. They would buy cattle and put in and feed their own. But they didn't raise enough hay for their own to do all that, like we did here. There was a big sale of Hereford and Shorthorn every year for about fifteen years down at Davis, California. One year when Albert Nichols went down, he bought three bulls. He shipped them to the valley by rail, and then he had George Banks come down with a team of four horses and a sleigh and another team of two horses and a sleigh driven by another fellow. They loaded the two bulls on the four-horse team and the third bull on the one-horse team. (You could lead the bulls around just like a horse; they had halters on them.)

By the time Banks got them out here, I tell you it was hot, and there was a big washout in the road! It was deep and wide. This old guy, Homer Wilson, was kind of a witty old guy. He said, "I'll bet you old Banks had a sack of pups when he came to this!" But Nichols had come there before the washout, before it got too hot, and that's how he had gotten by. (The mail stage driver used to come along there with four horses, and I don't know how the hell he ever got across it; it's a mystery to me.) So they brought the bulls back here and put them on the ranch owned by the A. S. Nichols Company. (It's sold now; today it's called the Bony ranch. But Bony died and it was auctioned off. Bony's heirs along with another man own the ranch now.) That's where Nichols had his feedlot.

When Prohibition came in in 1919, they had all that excess barley that used to go into making beer, so ranchers started feeding it to their cattle. The barley was shipped in, maybe from the East. Then cottonseed cake and meal came in. The cottonseed cake was a whole lot better supplement because we have a low quality of protein in the hay. We fed that cottonseed cake to milk cows, too. Before that, they only had hay.

The cottonseed cake worked fine until the transportation cost got up to where we couldn't afford to buy it anymore. Then when the feedyards started, it wasn't economically efficient to feed cattle the cottonseed cake and then send them out. (That practice stopped about 1934.) Mostly the cattle right now here in this country are bought as great big calves weighing around six or seven hundred pounds, and they're mostly shipped east.

The winter of 1922 was exceptionally hard in this country. The snow got to be nine feet deep here at the ranch. My dad had fed a carload of steers, which consisted of about thirty-two head of beef steers. That winter my dad was out of feed for those cattle, and he had to sell them for that reason, and also to have enough money to pay taxes. He didn't sell his entire herd, though—just the thirty-two head. At that time we milked about forty cows, plus we had a few others. If it wasn't too good, we'd put two calves on the cows. (My dad later probably bought a few more cattle—enough to make up the thirty-two head he'd sold.)

On March 18, some cattle buyers came here, and I can still see them today, standing out on this pile of snow. Each one had on a black fur overcoat; it was that cold. So they made a deal, and my dad sold them the cattle. The next afternoon was just bright and warm—you'd never think it had ever been cold—and we drove the cattle over to a

neighbor's ranch and stayed there that night. The next morning we got up and it was bright and sunny. We went down and corralled the cattle in Loyalton. They went down there ahead of time and had to dig trenches around the corral fences. Otherwise, the cattle could walk right on that snow over the fences.

Then the next day we went over to the ranch that's now owned by the Goss Corporation and we stayed there. A cattle shipper came up to get the cattle. He wanted to wait for the cattle train to come through because five cars of cattle is quite a string of cattle. Then we went up and loaded the cattle. It was uphill there at Chilcoot, so they had to push all the cars uphill. They had crowbars with bevels on them, and they'd put the bevel under the wheel and pry it. That's the way we spotted the five cars. We just pried the car right down the track. We got those cars loaded, and oh, boy, it was hot! I sweat like the dickens that day, even though it was March. That next morning we left for home.

The thing that stopped my dad from feeding steers with cottonseed cake was that he had a couple of carloads of his own cattle, and then he took a carload of other people's cattle and fed them. This fellow wanted them shipped down to Marysville and killed on consignment. Well, that guy took my dad like Grant took Richmond. My dad ended up about four hundred dollars short out of that carload of steers. My mother had read in the old *Pacific Rural Express*—the old farm newspaper—that a man who handled farm products had to have a state license. So we found out who the commissioner was in Sacramento; his name was C. J. Carey. My dad and I went down there to see him. The man my dad sold the cattle to was named Johnson; he was from Marysville. Oh, he was a cocky old guy. He thought he had us right where he

wanted us. But we got back *almost all* of the money he owed us. I think it was only four hundred dollars that we didn't get because that guy didn't have them on consignment. So we had to take our money and he took his commission. That stopped my dad from feeding steers.

My dad and I never got along at all, and I finally left home in 1926. I went down to Healds Business College in Sacramento just before the Depression. To get a diploma from Healds Business College, you had to pass an examination and get 90 percent in everything. Well, I got 90 percent in everything except spelling, in which I got 50 percent. I knew I couldn't do it, and I just simply dropped out and started working in different places.

I worked for Standard Oil running the adding machine in the basement of the Capitol building. I was down there six weeks right in the hottest part of the summer in Sacramento. When I got done with that, the Union Oil Company wanted some extra help, so I went down and worked there for six weeks. It was a temporary job because a man there had gotten hurt, and it was six weeks until he got back to work. Then a fellow that worked for Swifts and Company in Sacramento got spinal meningitis. I think he got it in those old buildings down there on the waterfront in Sacramento on about Second Street. One fellow replaced him and he couldn't do the job, so they sent me down there. They had such a terrific volume of business, and with the system they had, it was just too much—I just couldn't do it, so I quit. I got a steady job working for a printing company, and then I got a job for eighty-five dollars a month to pump gas. Eighty-five dollars a month! That's all I could get when I got done in school.

While I was working for the printing company, my mother's oldest brother was

a special agent and adjuster for the Queen, Royal, Newark and Capital Fire Insurance Companies. He lived at the Sutter Club, which was an exclusive club. One day I went down to the post office in Sacramento to get my mail, and he saw me there; this was in 1927. He said, "Hey, you better get out of this town because there's going to be a readjustment of everything and girls are going to take the kind of job you've got, and you won't have a job. I'll tell you, go out and get a job somewhere out here for a dollar a day and save your money!" Well, who is going to save any money out of a dollar a day? So I didn't do it!

About Christmastime or so, I saw him again and he said, "Are you still in town?"

I said, "Yes, I'm still here. Where can I get a job? All the agriculture work is done, the construction work is done, logging work is done. There just aren't any jobs to be had." It was just like he said. But then my father came down and took me to the Shrine East-West football game. He offered me a job about a month later to work at the ranch for fifty-five dollars a month, my board, room, and my mother did my laundry. I had the family car and it was a heck of a lot better thing for *me*.

When I came back to the ranch in 1928, I trapped again; I caught coyotes and things like that. When I was trapping that winter, an old fellow—he used to be kind of a horse trader—said to me, "Hey, Strang! How many coyotes you got?"

I said, "I've got ten."

"I'll trade you that Adams cow horse down there for those coyote hides."

And I said, "Yes, I guess you would. Those coyote hides are worth ten dollars apiece, and that horse down there isn't worth anything more than chicken feed."

So he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll make a deal with you. I'll sell that horse to you for thirty-five dollars."

I said, "All right. If I can get my outfit on him and ride him off the ranch, I'll do it." And I did. Well! Then I went to work at Lake Tahoe. I hadn't paid the guy for the horse and he came over and got forty-five dollars for that horse out of my old man—and he was supposed to be his good friend! [laughter]

Before I had left Sacramento to go to the ranch in 1928, I'd gone to the state office building and put in my application for one of these quarantine inspection stations like the one between California and Nevada. I thought maybe I could work down there and also work around the ranch for my board, and I'd have a pretty good deal. Well, they didn't see it that way. They sent me out to break in on the job at Truckee, and then they sent me up to North Lake Tahoe at the first station up there by the Cal-Neva Lodge. But it was a pretty good deal for me: I got \$150 a month at that time in 1928, which was big money. I also got \$10 a month for my gas and oil to go down to the grocery store to get my mail. But I let my old car tires go flat, so I walked down there and back and I did pretty good; I needed the exercise. I worked up at the station from June to October. I really enjoyed that job. It was a nice place, and I didn't have a whole lot of people coming in there from the other side of the lake. There was nothing but a dirt road, and there were very few people that came by except during the middle of the summer, and I had a dandy time up there.

In the fall of 1929, they sent me down to Calexico near Mexicali, and I worked down there, and I got my same \$150 a month. I also got \$35 a month from Uncle Sam for wearing the federal badge, and I made good money; I was a quarantine inspector. The only thing I had to do was to take the bananas, sugar cane and oranges away from anybody that came across. It was kind of a dirty job, really, but it

was worth it at the price I was getting. I had a heck of a good time down there.

After I came back from that job, I had to take a civil service examination to qualify as an entomologist. Here I had worked two years at it, and I had to take that exam. But it was just an oral examination; it didn't amount to a thing, really. Well, I didn't pass it. So I came back to the ranch for my fifty-five dollars a month, and I worked there.

I was glad that I had taken my uncle's advice—I saved the money I earned between February 10 and June of 1929 and had a cold \$1,200. I told my dad what my uncle had said about saving money, but the cattle business was good in 1928. (That was during the Coolidge boom, and things were pretty good.) On February 29, 1929, my dad sold a carload of steers in South San Francisco for \$12.75 a hundred pounds. That's the highest price any cattle has sold for since 1918. Then it began to drop. By November of 1929, you couldn't have gotten four cents for those steers.

Well, my dad came home with that big check, and he said, "See there? See how damn crazy old Abe is? The cattle business has never been so good!" Then when he got done that fall, I asked him what he thought about it then!

In the fall of 1929, my dad went down to San Francisco and bought a great big purebred Holstein bull—a high producer—and brought him to the ranch. The price of beef had fallen so we went back into the dairy business in a big shake. But my dad was having trouble with finding milkers, so he took the cows down to the lower country and sold them out. He just had the scrubs left. (I later took those over, and ran it up to about 150 head of cows. Then I had some Holsteins, but those calves are awful on heifers, so I got a little Aberdeen Angus bull and put it with them. That way, I got smaller calves. Now I've got Red Angus.)

During the Depression, butter got so cheap that the local creamery used to make its profit on the moisture and the salt that was in butter, which was about 20 to 25 percent. They got so they couldn't make money and we had to pay them to sell our butter! What we had was a dairy right along, but we also had steers to sell for beef. (We also sold the heifers that we didn't need for beef.) Then we raised the hogs on the skim milk. That was the flow for cash, plus the butter. No one made a profit in Sierra Valley during the Depression. Our neighbors were all in the same situation. These were hard times. One man down here lost his whole ranch and all he had left was his house. Oh, I tell you, it was awful in this country for a while!

In 1926, before the Depression, I'd taken up some life insurance, and I had quite a bit. At the same time, my dad bought a 450-acre ranch near his land. Then he and I went into bids on another piece, but we had to give that up. He bought all this land, but he didn't have enough income. He had both ranches in the Federal Land Bank. When the taxes came due and the Federal Land Bank payment came due, the ranch didn't have it. So my mother asked me if it would be all right if they borrowed the money from me. I paid the interest to the Federal Land Bank and the taxes to the county out of my life insurance. If we hadn't done that, we would have lost the ranch right there. That was in 1932.

When the Depression hit, my dad had some old dairy cows that he couldn't get any money for (the price was down to about two-and-a-half cents a pound), so he started butchering them and selling them in ten-, fifteen-, and twenty-pound chunks in Calpine or to anyone who would buy them. Calpine was a big mill town then—they had the mill and the box factory. Mostly all the families would buy meat, which my dad sold

door-to-door. We got a pretty good price; we started out a pretty good business. That's when I started in the butcher business. We made about twenty-five or thirty dollars a day. I butchered my own cattle for a while, and then I had to buy cattle. I learned how to butcher from good, hard experience—by people showing me how. Then we built the slaughterhouse and everything, and I took over the butcher business with thirty-eight hundred dollars of my own money. We did that for four or five years. It was one heck of a good business.

In 1934, I bought one of those Hudson Terraplanes, and boy, it was some car! It was a beautiful car and a different kind of color and everything else. So I'd run down to the old man down here (his name was Martinetti), and he'd say, "Ho! Ho! Ho! You got the new car. Our girl will get you now!" [laughter] And she did—I got married the next year!

About 1934, Calpine decided it was going to move, and everybody just folded up their pocketbooks and I hardly made a thing in the butcher business. Then in 1935, the state came along, and I had to fix up the slaughterhouse operation with a concrete floor and concrete plaster on there and everything, and cover the doors with metal and things like that. Before that it was just an old shed with a concrete floor. When I wanted to butcher cows, I butchered them in the evening after the flies had gone to bed. Then I'd get up early in the morning and carry meat in before the flies got bad. I just ran the blood out into the corral. Then the state made me fix it all up, and I had to have a cesspool for the blood; I was going to have to dig out the gut room and put it in. They were going to put me on inspection, but the law fixed it up so I didn't have to. Then they came along and told me that I was going to have to put in a cooker to cook that blood

and the guts and the things like that. I said, "I won't do it."

The inspector said, "Well, we'll take your license away from you."

I said, "Take it!" After that, I *bootlegged* more meat out of that slaughterhouse than I ever did when I still had the license. I sold meat in Calpine, Sierraville, and then Sattley.

The government helped supply some of the outfits like Nevada Packing in Reno. These big packing houses didn't want little guys working on the side! After I quit my license, I bought meat from Nevada Packing, and they would deliver meat to me *cheaper* than I could buy the cows and kill them myself. During the summer, they'd take the loins, rump, and rounds up by here, and I could buy those cheap. All they sold up at the lake were the loins and the prime ribs. I bought what they called the chuck—they go back at the fourth rib and cut that out, and then the fourth to the eighth rib is the prime rib. That summer I was just making money swell because of buying meat cheap, and I was getting a good price over here.

When I had to buy the meat, I had to buy two front quarters for every hind quarter. There isn't a lot of money in that; the money is in the hind quarter. These fellows over here worked for thirty-five cents an hour to earn a T-bone steak. But look at the difference now. I bet that today they make eleven dollars an hour in the mill to do the same kind of work. Look at how many pounds of T-bone steak they can buy for an hour of work right now, even with the price as high as it is.

I ran the slaughterhouse from 1933 until 1938, when the mill moved away. I ended up broke with \$450 in bad debts. I wonder to this day what in the devil went wrong.

Calpine used to nature-dry all their lumber. They had tramways built up. They

had what they called a spruce, but it was a red fir. There's three different kinds of fir: there's the white fir, there's mountain red fir, and then Douglas fir. They took all that fir and they made these great big tramways. There'd be tramways up near high as my ceiling and sometimes higher. They'd start at the base down here, and then they'd run the piles much higher than the tramway. They had what they called Ross carriers, and they took a piece of about an eight-by-eight inch board and then they'd cut a notch on each end. Then the Ross carrier would drive right over that, push the thing in there, and then they'd raise it up and they'd take it down. Whatever dimension they'd want, they'd take it to that pile and air-dry it. In the wintertime, they had a bunch of men there who'd take the lumber down when it was dry. There were the pilers and the take-downers. The pilers worked year-round, but the take-downers were seasonal labor.

This used to be all heavy timber up here. In 1962, there was one heck of a storm, and it just washed that out. I had a weir in the creek and the storm washed it out; it just filled up this man's creek down here. You see, those big trees up there held the moisture, and when they were gone, there was nothing there to hold it. There are enough trees up there left that will hold the snow, but there's not enough of those big trees to hold the moisture too well. That's *my* opinion.

As near as I can recollect, the extension service came into Quincy and into this valley around 1935. Then the extension agent started the 4-H a little later than that. (But he wasn't very capable. I don't think I'd better say it this way, but he liked to get drunk. He was very conceited, and he wanted it to be his whole show—he didn't want anybody else to have anything to do with it. When he got a helper, the helper had to be the same kind of person.)

My daughter wasn't the first one in 4-H, but she was close to it. The 4-H has been a big help to this country. When I want a lot of advice, I go there; I get advice from them still.

When the agent first came to the valley, he gave advice on feed, diseases, cattle, crops, and things like that. But mostly his work was just with the 4-H kids and the feeding of 4-H steers. The way he showed us how to feed the 4-H steers was quite a bit different from the way we were used to. When we had fed the steers before, they were just fed the cottonseed or barley on hay. But with 4-H, the steers were weighed in November and they had to weigh a certain amount. The agent prescribed a certain ration mixed up with protein, carbohydrate, salt and minerals, and we had to feed them three times a day. The kids almost had to live with those steers, but it went over pretty well. My granddaughter did just swell in 4H, and my daughter did, too. My granddaughter had steers, and she got the showmanship championship in sheep there one year. When she got too old for 4-H, she had saved nearly five thousand dollars of her own money.

Another thing they did in 4-H was they started a Christmas tree farm. Art Scarlet took that over; he was the farm advisor. (He's down here now, and he's pretty near ready to retire.) I belonged to the Christmas Tree Association. I've got about three hundred acres up here of natural trees, but that's just Christmas trees. Then they started growing the farm trees, and there were four different types of trees that we could grow and sell. We didn't sell anything through the association, though. I dropped out of the association because I wasn't getting anything out of it.

I sold my trees through one man for nearly twenty years. I just sold them to him as stumpage, and he cut them and brought them down and piled them up here. Then

we measured them. We got so much a foot for the whites and so much a foot for the silver tips. This work takes place in the fall, but a lot of people can't get off to do it. First you cut the tree and then you cut off all the limbs. You're supposed to let one go, but some people leave two. Well, in about seven or eight years, you've got another beautiful Christmas tree. Then they go back around and one that isn't doing so well, they cut off.

My Christmas trees are getting pretty big up there now. Last fall, this man's son came here and he had some friends down at Auburn. He wanted to get six hundred trees. His help quit on him, but he got four hundred, anyway. Out of all those trees, there was only one tree that you could call a whip; that's a tree that just has no shape to it—just straight up and down. All of the rest of those trees were just as fine a bunch of trees as you wanted to see. They were *big*—they averaged over seven feet to the tree. I've got some nice trees up here, but it's hard work to get them.

The first time *I* ever had anything to do with cutting Christmas trees was in 1935. But there's a man here by the name of C. F. Campbell who started cutting Christmas trees back in 1928. Everyone called him "Old Silver Tip," because he used to cut a certain specie of fir that has silver tips. When they're up in that high country, they're late. He used to go up and cut them up at the Walker mine. That mine is out from this side of Portola. When the new needles come up, they're silver and they stay late. In 1928 he had a sawmill up the canyon from Calpine, but I don't know what became of that. Then he quit and did some logging. His great-granddaughter lives over there at Sattley, but I've lost track of them.

There's a Christmas tree farm over at Calpine; I guess it's ten acres or more. A real estate man from Los Angeles bought the

Calpine farm. He had to come up here to get so many of the trees and dig them right out by the roots and wrap them in burlap or plastic. I think he took them to Los Angeles. There's another one down by Beckwourth, but they were kind of fly-by-nighters. That outfit all blew up. Some of the trees didn't grow for quite a long time, so I called it the "petrified forest." The trees aren't getting very tall because they were planted too thick there. I have neighbors tell me that coyotes and deer live out there. These farms were started ten or fifteen years after mine.

Around 1936, I wanted to lease about thirty acres of land from my dad to grow Christmas trees. My dad came right out very plainly and said, "You're just crazier than hell! You can't grow Christmas trees!" But the Christmas trees started growing and he made big money off of them. Finally, before he died, he said, "That was the best thing you could have done was to have gone into the Christmas tree business." And it would have been, too, but it was really too late.

My father died in 1963, then my mother died two years later. Then I bought my sister out in 1971 and I paid off the Federal Land Bank. I had borrowed a lot of money from the Progress Credit Corporation, and between the two of them, I paid out \$85,000; \$55,000 to the Federal Land Bank and \$30,000 in the Progress Credit Corporation for restocking.

I quit ranch work about six years ago. I was doing pretty well until the spring of 1982. I went out and tried to get on my horse, and I just couldn't do it. I couldn't get my leg over the saddle, so I quit. I was coming back from looking at my calves, and my horse stubbed his left toe and I went back, and oh, boy, he tore my left hip up something awful! I tried riding a couple of times more, but I

couldn't do it. Then my wife went into the hospital, and she had that operation. She was there eighty-six days, and she died. That's when I quit my active work.



---

## LIFE IN THE VALLEY: FRANK DOTTA

The Swiss-Italians were the principal ethnic group here in the northern end of Sierra Valley. There were a few English, but they were among the minorities. The English and Irish were down more in the southern end of the valley than here at this end. In order to find out some information about my family, I went to Switzerland in September of 1989 to look at church records in Lugano, the city my mother came from. Lugano is in the high elevations near the Saint Gotthard Tunnel in southern Switzerland. Switzerland is made up of three components—the German-Swiss, which are the majority; the French-Swiss are the next; and the minorities are the Swiss-Italians. They had some church records there that went back to the eighteenth century.

My mother's name was Claudina Ponci and her father was a shoemaker. They lived in Lugano. My grandfather would go across the border into Italy and make bricks or whatever they did down there. Then in the wintertime when the work was down, he would go back to Switzerland.

My father, Lodovico Dotta, also came from the Swiss-Italian part of Switzerland. He lived in Fontana, which is just outside a larger community called Airolo. His family had dairy cattle, but the dairies there are small. If you have twenty cows, that's a large herd in the Alps. They were into cheese-making and butter-making there.

My father and his brothers came to Sierra Valley in 1864. (I think they had some relatives who had arrived earlier.) Their decision to come here was mostly based in economics: there were too many people for the land in Switzerland, and there were two ways to go—America or California. [laughter] The Gold Rush had begun in 1849, and there was still some activity in California in the 1860s, so they went there. My father's brothers probably came directly to Sierra Valley, but my dad went to Garden Valley near Placerville and spent some time there. He was probably doing some gold mining there, but that was petering out. I think he also had a little piece of property there and a few cows, so he was doing a little ranching on a small scale. Then

when his older brothers went back to the old country, he came to Sierra Valley after selling his property.

My father had accumulated enough money—eighty-five hundred dollars—to buy half an interest in the Ramelli ranch in Sierra Valley. Some of the money could have been from his gold money, but generally the Swiss are real frugal. I guess most Europeans that came at that time didn't throw their money around.

Before my parents got married, my father lived with the Ramelli family because our house wasn't built then. I don't think there was a barn or anything else, either. My mother came directly from Lugano to Vinton because her uncle and aunt ran a rooming house or a bar or something up there. Their name was Canonica. I think my mother said when she pulled in on the train, the conductor pointed to this place, and on the roof was painted "Swiss Home." She was working her passage off there as the cook or bottle-washer or whatever, and that's where she met my dad. My father and mother were married in 1894. He was fifty-four and she was twenty-three, so that made the difference in the breeding program that went on there. [laughter] My parents had seven children. I fit in next to the last. I think my father was seventy-two when I was born. There was almost a generation lapse between us, so I really didn't know my dad too well.

My father and Ramelli divided up the ranch just before my dad got married. He and Ramelli drew straws when they split, and my dad got twelve hundred acres. Naturally I think this is the best ranch! [laughter] We have a southern exposure here; we have the mountain; we're out of the mud; and for calving, it's a lot better. We were also away from the road, and I think that Ramelli probably appreciated being more on the main

road. So everybody was happy. The water rights for the property were divided equally. (I think the water rights were later adjudicated in the early 1930s, so as far as priorities and the amounts of water, it was pretty equal between the two parcels.)

The main source of income on the ranch was dairying, which was hard work. It was a twice daily job, holidays and all, because the cows had to be milked. Of course, milking the cows was only part of the problem: you had to feed them, muck the barn out, and wash the dairy utensils. It was an ongoing process. When they made the cheese and the butter, the hired hands didn't sit around much.

When my father was dairying, he hired head milkers. (By the time I took over the ranch around 1935, a lot of milking machines were being used. It was more efficient that way, and they weren't getting the milkers from the old country to come back.) My father employed mostly Swiss-Italians. That was part of the game plan, I guess. A fellow would move out here from the old country and then his brothers or friends would come on out, and they would probably work for a year or two milking. Then they would get a piece of land and be set up in business, and they would get some cows. That's how they got into the business there. It wasn't too much money involved, really; more often the rancher would give the fellow so many cows, and the fellow paid him back on his product. Of course, he was building his herd up as things went along.

If you hired a milker, he was supposed to be able to milk a string of cows, which runs from twenty-five to thirty cows. I think my father ran two strings here, so he probably was milking fifty cows or something like that. We had a couple of hired hands, because then came the feeding of the cattle in the winter and the chores. They had to cut trees down for the heating. This work was all done with

horses, and it was a lot slower. Whatever farming people did was done with horses. They didn't jump on a tractor and plow forty acres in twenty-four hours.

We had 125 or 150 cattle, because we had a replacement bunch of heifers. It's hard to estimate how much land it takes to support a cow, because it varies so much. On one hill on the ranch it'd probably take sixty acres for one cow. Then in this meadow, you'd probably put five cows to an acre, so there's such a variance that you have to play it by ear. Then, of course, if you had droughts, it's even harder to pinpoint. Overall, acres would probably determine the size of your herd.

We didn't do any real farming here at this place; it was all native grass hay that we cut. Some of the farmers that didn't have as good an irrigation system did grow grains like rye, or they grew some alfalfa. My father grazed cattle on the ranch, and I think they grazed on public land to the north of the ranch near Frenchman's Lake. (That was before the U.S. Forest Service came in after the turn of the century.) There were some meadows there, and this was where they took the dairy herd. The family really didn't have any beef herd—it was just dairying. Steer calves were raised for meat, and the heifers were replacement for the milking herd.

We got a gallon from each of the sixty milkers to feed the calves and hogs. You could get some grain and cook it up with the milk to feed the hogs. We had fifteen or twenty hogs running around here all the time! We had a big hog pen, but it's gone now because I don't have hogs anymore. The hogs were put out to forage for themselves, but you had to put rings in their noses, or they'd plow up all the meadows and everything. The hogs would get roots to eat, but you still had to supplement them because they couldn't make it on their own.

There were also a lot of sheep that grazed through the area, but they'd only come through in the summer on their way into the Nevada desert. The Basque people were the sheep people. And we had a few chickens around for their eggs. Once in a while the family would eat one. (The only chickens they ate were the old, fat hens that didn't lay anymore.) I never would eat chicken, and that was because when the chickens were turned loose, sometimes they'd pick the cow leavings! [laughter] I think I was probably allergic to chicken, but I never cared for it or any kind of fowl, really.

We made cheese here on the ranch when I was growing up. My family used a *caldera* to make the cheese. It's a big copper kettle that they would bring up to the Dotta summer range in late April or early May. Then when they were done, they'd haul it out probably in August or in the fall. They probably had the *caldera* sheltered indoors because you'd have to have a fireplace set up; you'd have to have a crane or a derrick to swing the thing into and away from the fire.

Making cheese is really a simple process. They put the raw milk in a kettle and mixed it with some rennet, which is a clabbering agent. Then it was heated to a certain degree. Before it had clabbered, they broke the curd up and heated it up until the curd got to a certain stage. Then they took the curd out with a big cheesecloth and put it in the forms, which were round band affairs. After it was in the forms, weights were put on to press the whey out of it and harden it up. Then it was taken up to the cellar and put on big boards. They turned the cheese every day and rubbed it with salt. (Of course, they had to keep turning it, because it would kind of get a little mold on it that had to be scraped off.) I think that process probably went on for three weeks or

so. You could eat it then, but it wasn't cured. The best cheese was aged for probably six months to a year.

Another thing that determined good cheese would be the cellar. If a cellar was too dry, it was no good; the cheese would dry out and crack. And if it was too wet, then the mold would build up. We were fortunate here because we had a good cellar, which is not in existence anymore. It was underground on rocks and it had a shed over the top. Because it was on rocks, if water got in there, it would drain out, and you could let the door open. But I guess you tested the humidity by hand! [laughter]

Our cellar was about twelve by fifteen feet, and you could stand up in there. There were work tables in the cellar where they rolled the butter out. (There was a spring-fed waterwheel that turned the churn to make butter, but that's gone now.) We stored up a lot of cream and cheese in the cellar, which we sometimes sold to the mines. Someone would take the cheese by wagon from our summer range over the mountain into Sierra Valley, and then to the mining towns. But mostly our cheese was more for family use. Maybe you made twenty-four rounds or something, and you gave one to your neighbor or whatever! [laughter]

The type of cheese that everyone made was like a cheddar, but of course, there was no coloring in it. The best cheese was made in the springtime when the first grasses grew, because that provided more flavor and more cream. Nobody made cheese in the wintertime or the fall, because the cattle ate hay, which didn't have flavoring like your clovers and dandelions.

I think the Swiss-Italians had a monopoly on cheese-making in the valley. It was very much in demand in Reno, Virginia City, and other places. The Swiss-Italians also made

sausage. They would put the mix back in the casings, and I think the English or other groups would put it in the barrels and stuff. I think the bacons and hams were made about the same way. Of course, the Swiss-Italians also made liver sausage and mortadellas. Everything went in a gut somewhere—even the pig skin. They'd scald it and get the hair off. Then they'd cut strips off the skin, and that was ground up and mixed with some other meats for sausage. It was an assortment of goodies. They didn't throw away anything but the squeal, I guess. [laughter]

The principal markets for things that were produced here in Sierra Valley were in Reno and in Virginia City—a lot of dairy products, like cheese and cream, were sent up there. The Dotta ranch was typical of other ranches in that we produced dairy products. As far as pork and beef go, I think most of the pork was hauled live to some of these places rather than butchering it. I imagine it was simpler because you didn't have to worry about refrigeration and it was fresh. The beef must have been butchered. When I was growing up, I remember there were two or three packing plants in Reno.

We made sausage when I was young. In fact, we were making sausage in the middle-1940s. We didn't have a slaughterhouse on the ranch—just a pine tree to hang the animals on. You generally butchered in the fall or the wintertime, so that reduced the spoilage problem and avoided the fly season. Now, in the summer months, for meat here on these ranches, they would take turns when they had any crews. One fellow would butcher a beef this week, and everybody took a quarter, and then next week your neighbor did it, and you got a quarter. That's how they got away from the need for refrigeration. Of course, meat keeps pretty well up in this climate. If you hang your meat up at night and then let it

crust, and in the daytime throw some blankets on it and put it in a cool room, it keeps pretty well.

Then, of course, each ranch had an icehouse, which was a special building. In the wintertime, when the creeks froze, they went out to harvest ice. They covered it up with sawdust and it kept. (I have an icebox that I fully restored. It's a Sears & Roebuck deal; I think the family paid \$7.50 for that thing. It's in pretty good shape yet. The ice went into the top, and the pan went underneath for the drippings.)

There weren't many Indians out here when I was growing up. There were a few, as I understand...just roving bands that went through hunting deer and ducks which they would trade for bread or whatever. But there weren't too many Indians that were steadily employed around the ranches. The ones that were in the area were probably Washo or Paiute. (The Maidus were up into Indian Valley, Taylorsville, to the west of here. From the history I've been reading, the Maidus were basket-makers, and that was quite an art.) But up here, the Indians weren't employed too much—they were just sort of roving. The Paiutes, as I understand, weren't really too ambitious. I hope they forgive me for saying that now! [laughter]

The only instance I know of Indians in the area is a story that was told to me by an old fellow that was riding through when he was about sixteen years old in the late 1880s or so. He said he was riding his horse through here and he looked down and somewhere right in this vicinity there was a big bonfire going. He had sneaked up so he could see what was happening. There was a lot of brush piled up and he saw that there were Indians marching around and war-whooping and whatever. He said evidently one of the Indians had died and

they had put him on this fire and they were cremating the corpse. He said these Indians were marching around and war-whooping and that they would reach over there and get some of the liquid running out of the body and put it on themselves. I said, "Well, what did you do?"

He said, "I just got the *hell* out of there."

I have found arrowheads in this area, but there's more and more people out looking for them. I found some bedrock mortars in the valley where I live. The Indians surely came through here; I think this was their summer hunting area because it's not too far over to the east here at Long Valley, which was more temperate in the wintertime than the Pyramid Lake area. I imagine that this was a good game country as far as deer, ducks and quail.

The only Indian labor I knew of in the area was when one of the squaws would come and do laundry. Our particular area did not use Indian labor. I guess they had Schweizers [Swissers] doing it. [laughter]

As I grew up before the 1920s, I can remember the fellows going up and cleaning ditches and doing a lot of fence work and things like that. (Of course, back then you had to make your own fence posts, and it was quite a job. Now we go buy a bunch of steel posts and throw them in a pick-up!) The fellows would stay at the Dotta summer range, where there was a small shed to cook and sleep. They also stocked things in there, like salt. The old summer range was located near Frenchman Creek in Little Last Chance Valley. Those fellows would load up a whole wagonload of pots, pans and groceries, and they were gone for the summer! I always had a suspicion that they were on vacation, because there were some beautiful fish in the streams.... [laughter]

*Accompanied by the interviewer, Mr. Dotta visited the old Dotta summer range in the fall of 1989. Here is his description of the ruins of the dairy and other structures:*

The shed was probably built in the early 1900s for summer use—no one stayed there in the wintertime. It was used for storage and then converted to a place where you could cook or get out of the weather. The door was in the northeast corner, as I remember. (They would probably never have a door facing west, because that's where storms came from. You'd always have your door on the east or south side.) The shed had a wooden floor, but I think it kind of went by the wayside. There were some windows, too.

When this structure [cabin/cook house] was built, they used a combination of square nails and whatever else was handy. So this building isn't ancient by any means. I don't know exactly when the nail transition came in, but knowing the Swiss and their savings, they would have used a lot of square nails even after round nails were made. They probably pulled them out of other buildings and used them again.

There was a dairy building at the summer range, but that was long gone before my time. But there are some log ruins nearby that were the original structure, I think. There might have been sleeping quarters in there. As I can remember, this is the way this place has looked for sixty years. [laughter] My family didn't stay here, but there were probably some milkers that would come up to be with the cows.

Evidently there were some more buildings, because there were some little corrals and calf stanchions where they took the calves away as they milked the cows. They would bucket-

feed the calf, and then it would probably drink skim milk if you were making cream, or whey from the butter. The calves were in a little corral and they had troughs that they would come to. The stanchion would lock them in there as they drank their milk or whatever. Then they were turned loose and had grass and stuff out there. I don't recall any other buildings that were there, because a lot of them burned down.

After a fire later came through here in 1931, our summer range was used by a logging company that had probably twenty-five or thirty men. The loggers probably went in there because they were close to a water supply. That's probably the last time that the cabin was used for human habitation. There was a woman who did the cooking for the loggers. That's why there are probably some tin cans lying around. There was a wood kitchen stove here. The loggers put in a road south of our old cellar and cleaned some of the timber off of the foothills. (Our family used the original road around the bend off to the west to run the cattle up to the range. The road was used starting in early May until August or sometime, depending on the weather and feed conditions.)

When they needed logs, people just went up and cut some cedar trees and brought them down. There were some lumber mills back up in there nearby north of the creek. It was the main road that went on up into the upper Last Chance Valley to the other Galeppi ranches and the Trosi and Ramelli area. That's the road that was used before the highway was finished. The road into this area came over from the south and it dropped right down to here. A wagon and horses and cowboys could ride in, but as far as automobile roads, there was no such thing here.

My father died in 1920 when I was seven years old. After his death, my mother ran the ranch. Of course, we were hiring milkers and other hired help by then. She was able to run the ranch because as we grew up, we fell into the job, too.

Ours was one of the last dairies in the valley. I think by the 1930s the time had come to go from dairying to beef—everybody in the area did it, including my mother. One thing was that the Swiss-Italians weren't coming into this country as much, so help was harder to get. But the main thing was the health department: The state inspector would come by and throw this out and say, "You can't do this" or "You can't do that." I think most dairies were clean operations, but the rules and regulations came down that you couldn't do this and had to do this.... I think that had a lot to do with the change from dairying to beef.

As the ranch was slowly turning into a beef operation, the beef cattle were going back up into the mountains. The dairying was getting less, so the operation stayed here at the home ranch in the summer. It was kind of a transition that just evolved. (But there was some dairying that was going on with one family in particular in the 1930s: Greg Ramelli still had property up at Frenchman's Lake, and I know he took his dairy cows up there.)

We all helped out on the ranch, but eventually the girls all married and moved away from home. My older brother had gotten killed in a hunting accident when he was only fourteen. He was hunting ducks and was dragging an old shotgun through a fence, and the thing got him. I can barely remember him. I had another older brother, and he stayed with the ranch for a while, but he had other things to do, so he left. I remained here with my mother until 1935, when she passed away.

Then I bought the place and paid off the rest of the family.

When I bought the ranch I considered getting a loan from the Federal Land Bank. But before they would lend you any money you had to quiet title, which was a scary thing then. [laughter] So I talked to our local banker and he said, "Why do you want to go through that? You could work out your financing right in the family there. You don't need all that." So we did, and that was my only experience with the Federal Land Bank. When I made an application, they came back and said, "You have to quiet title. It sounds like it's going to be a *year-long* process." So we didn't use them, but I had no argument with the Federal Land Bank. Some of my family bought ranches through the Land Bank in the 1930s, and it was a good thing—interest rates were low. I thought what they did here with those people was fine.

By about 1935 we were milking probably ten or twelve cows, but we were mostly into beef and Hereford cattle, so the dairying was mostly over by the time I got the ranch. It has remained a beef operation since then. I've crossed Angus cattle with Hereford, because of the hybrid vigor and all, but the first cattle that were here were Shorthorns. They were more of the milking strain, and the Hereford was more of a beef cattle.

I was the last kid left here on the ranch when my mother died, and I really didn't want to be a rancher. I had other things I wanted to do, like going to school, but I sort of fell into the groove here. About the only goal I could see was that it looked like beef was the way to go, and it was something that I could operate myself. When I took over the ranch, I knew it would be a beef deal from then on.

After I took over, I used to hire a lot of transients in the summer months for haying. I was just a punk kid, and they were giving me a

bad time, so I mechanized as much as I could and I finally got the thing down where I could do it all myself. I was probably one of the first fellows that bought a tractor to cut hay here in this part of Sierra Valley. This was before World War II. I think my neighbor and I were the first two to get rid of the need for horses. Then we got into some contract baling, and we got our own self-propelled baling machines. I felt so great that I could have worked twenty-four hours a day by myself out there. (Before this, we needed twelve to sixteen head of work horses for our haying operation, so we bred our mares. We never had a stallion, but there was always a fellow that just made the circuit with his stallion. Of course, we had saddle horses for cattle. There were some people that raised horses commercially, but we didn't.)

After I took over, I found I could run 299 head of beef cattle without going and renting pasture outside of Forest Service permits. I've been handling that many cattle since then by myself without hiring extra help. If I'd hired extra help, I would have had to get more cattle, and then it would be more rent and more problems. I feel that efficiency is probably the name of the game, and you can do it. Whenever you hire a whole group of people, you lose so much efficiency...there's so much looseness.

I was married in 1941. I got a real good gal and we got along great. She fit right in with the deal. When you're a ranch wife, you're not only the cook and bottle washer, but you have to help cut hay or work in the fields or help with the cattle. As far as keeping the books, I was still the old eyeballs type! [laughter] I'm still too much of the old school—I would rather figure on the back of a fence post or something than get into a lot of fancy accounting books, but the wife helped on that part. We had two children who were born in the 1940s.

The first immediate impact of World War II was naturally the draft. When they started taking the draftees, that made a change in being able to find help on the ranches. Then, of course, we had rationing problems and couldn't get equipment or gas. They rationed farm machinery, so we had to do some things the way we had before we automated. But we didn't really have to completely go back to horse-drawn machinery as a consequence. Instead, we improvised. There was a fellow named Bill Pabst who was the blacksmith at Sierra Welding in Vinton. You couldn't buy a tractor, so I bought a couple of old Buicks for thirty-five dollars apiece. He cut them down to make tractors to pull hay rakes. They were rationing gas for automobiles, but you could get gas for agricultural use. So that was one way of getting equipment.

We also improvised when we baled hay. Baling was handled by custom balers that came through. When the bales were dropped on the ground, we had no other way to pick them up but with brute strength and a couple of hay hooks. We had to sort of invent different ways to do these things. To build a hay elevator, we went to the lumber mills and got some old green chain that they used to move lumber. At the lumber company as they cut the log, it went into the mill. Then it was cut into boards and dropped down on a sloping ramp. These chains came along, and they had kind of fingers on there that moved this lumber along. The fellows who worked on the green chain knew how the lumber was graded.

A lot of that old green chain was junk that they were throwing out. It was worn out, but it was the only thing we could find. Here's where Bill Pabst came in. Since he was a blacksmith and a welder, you went in there with your idea and said, "Well, you think this would work?"

“Yes, let’s try it.” So we made innovations and we got by. We had some crude contraptions to handle the work, but it got the job done.

As far as ranch labor went, some workers moved on to other things. I don’t think there were too many who came back to their old jobs. Salaries and wages offered at war plants on the coast were higher than what could be earned in agricultural labor, so some people quit ranching. I think some of that happened here. The Herlong army depot came into existence and Stead was a training base, so there were a lot of people who went in as carpenters and jobs like that. As a result, we were left with no help, really. There weren’t even the winos that we used to hire before, because they were into some better jobs, too. So it did drain the manpower. But of course, by mechanizing, we had eliminated a lot of the need for labor. Plus most of these ranches were a one- or two-man operation, except during the harvesting time or haying. And the women were just as good a cowboy then as they are now, so they helped.

There wasn’t too much Mexican labor here in the valley. The labor was done in this place because I hired high school kids and high school girls. The insurance company said no, but everybody looked the other way because things had to be done. The kids could drive a little tractor and rake the hay, which wasn’t a physical strain or anything. It was just like driving an automobile. We were supposed to work them four hours a day and four days off; we probably worked twelve hours a day, but we took care of them and we did what was right. We sure didn’t want to have a sweat shop or anything, but we had to depend on kids. A lot of them were real good, and some, like anything else, didn’t work too well.

It seemed like all these little counties wanted to win the war. Everybody said, “We’ve got to be the first to send everybody

in; we’ve got to win the war.” So I had a little problem with the local draft board, and every six months I’d be classified 1A or whatever! One time I went to the appeal board in Chico; there were three fellows who interviewed me. They asked me a few questions and one fellow said, “You go back there and you keep producing. We need you because you’re doing more.” They thought I was contributing more through food production. That fellow told me, “Every time those fellows put you in Class A, come on out.” So I would, and the appeal board always said, “Go back and ranch.” [laughter] I guess I wasn’t that patriotic.

When the war ended, rationing was off, so you could buy machinery and fencing materials, and that eased our problems. We hadn’t been able to get wire, because that was all steel. But after the war, there was a lot of surplus fencing and barbed wire that came back from overseas that was sold because there was such a demand. We had to maintain our fences by stretching them with some old baling wire, which was real hard to get. Before the automatic balers they had hand-tied wires, so I know myself that you didn’t cut the wire off of the bale; you unwound it and then you stretched it back out and used that over again. Any steel or metal were hard items to get ahold of.

There were a lot of old tractors, graders and other war surplus items that came through that the ranchers could use. I never did use any of it, because when Joe Blow got through with it.... If you needed a dump truck, you’d go down and get it, and it probably had three flat tires, the battery was dead, and the radiator was leaking. So you just forgot about it and did something else. But some people did use the graders and the tractors.

After the war, some people decided that they wanted to do something different than

what they'd been doing before the war, but I stayed with ranching. I was sort of committed to it. I didn't have other training, and it was a job; you didn't get fired. [laughter] After the war, when the economy picked up, ranchers made more money, so they paid their ranches off. I didn't buy any more land at the time, and I don't think there were too many people who did in Sierra Valley.

In the 1950s, some corporations came in to start buying the ranches up. (I can't see where acquiring the ranches made them a lot of money, but I think probably that the tax structure was favorable then for these corporations for their capital gains and write-offs.) One of the first people that came in here was Eugene Selvege, who was the head of the Lucky Lager brewing company. He bought a couple of ranches in the Loyalton area. I think the first ranch he bought belonged to Albert and Caesar Dotta, who were not related to me. That was the beginning. Then these corporations started drilling the irrigation wells, and the thing took off from there. People hadn't drilled wells before that. This was grass and native hay and cattle country. But these people came in here and got rid of the sagebrush and started growing crops—alfalfa, mostly—and drilling wells and irrigating the land.

There's been two or three different corporations that built up and then sold; Selvege was one. There was one fellow from Tule Lake that came here in the 1940s. He grew potatoes, but it didn't pan out. We even had old Armand Hammer in here from Occidental Petroleum—he owned property in here at one time in the early 1970s. He was running a purebred Angus operation, which is now moved to Denver. But he was in here for a few years, and I think that then was sold to the present owners, whose name is Lusk. I

think Lusk is a contractor or a house builder or something like that.

The large corporate farms introduced techniques that influenced the way that other ranchers and farmers did things. For instance, some area people began drilling wells. I never did, because it costs so much to prepare the land, and then you have all the problems that go with it. Frost is a killer in this country, and maybe I'm a pessimist, but because of frost I can't see the day this country is going to do big alfalfa deals. Also, they have put so damn many wells down that the water table has gone down.

Before water rights were adjudicated, no rancher was ever satisfied. [laughter] The natural flow of the creek came on down in February, March—or in some years April—the big water came, so everybody would put their dams in. When you couldn't hold the water anymore, it went down to your neighbor. So the man at the head of the creek could have control, and the guy at the tail end, why, he'd bitch like hell. There were instances where at nighttime, the fellow down below would go up and pull his neighbor's boards out. [laughter] So that was the way it was controlled and used.

I'm not too clear on how water adjudication got started in the 1930s, but it was Frank Humphrey in the Sierraville area that started the process. I think what brought it about was that Humphrey was in the process of selling his ranch. When you sold your ranch, you had to prove you had a water right. Of course, it really got everybody talking and started a lot of rumors and a lot of fears that somebody was going to take your water. So there was a lot of concern about adjudication and where we were all going to end up. It looked real bad, and nobody was happy with this deal, because they figured, "Oh, this is the unknown."

When the adjudication started, everyone agreed to have priorities in water and first-in-use. The system of water priority is first-in-use is first-in-right. And if the stream goes right through your forty acres, you have riparian rights. But then there are also appropriating rights. So even upstream, if the original part was riparian and then you took some water into another forty acres or whatever that you got later, then that would be appropriated water. That would be weaker than your riparian rights. There's probably some people on the end that had riparian rights that were a better right than appropriated rights on up the stream. But this is a subject that I'm not well versed on.

We went through the adjudication quite well, because whenever you're talking about water, you're going to *really* get into it: "I was here first and I used the water," and, "No, you didn't." But I think it was settled with hardly any litigation at all. When they started adjudication, the state of California sent in a man whose name was Les Jopson. He spent about three years here and came into your ranch and said, "Is this what you think you've been taking?" and "Does this look right to you?" He went to the next ranch and the next ranch, and he got that whole thing settled—one engineer. (Now, we built the reservoir up there and probably four carloads of state people are up there looking. [laughter] So that shows what's happened. We were fortunate that we only had one person. If we'd have had twenty people coming in here, I don't know...I think we'd still be fighting with one of them now.) Les Jopson was still alive a couple of years ago; he may still be alive now, but he'd be up in his nineties. He was an outstanding man in the history of California water because of the adjudication in the northeastern part of the state.

After adjudication, we had a water master. He'd come down to the creek, and he had his decree to go by, so it worked better. (Up until March 1, 1937, before the court decree, anybody could use all the water. But after March 1, when the decree took over, we needed a water master to control the stream down here.) The water master had a rotation system on the two creeks, and it worked. But of course, not everybody was happy with him. The problem that the water master had was that he had to figure on what day the creek would die. Then he'd better not cut the same guy off two years in a row, because he was showing favoritism, and he didn't know what the hell was going on. There were irrigators up at the Frenchman reservoir area. Say there's twenty cubic feet a second coming down. You figure, "Well, that ought to last another week, so I can start down here at Smith's place and work back on up." And so the water master would come up on a Tuesday, say, and tell you, "Well, as soon as Smith gets by, you get his amount," or whatever. Then he'd come back about Monday and say, "You're out of water."

"How come?"

He might say, "Well, Galeppi and Ramelli put their dams in and killed the creek." [laughter] There would be some verbal exchanges over the water, but not any big fisticuffs that I can recall. But some people were never happy.

After the court decree on the water, the county collected the tax. We contributed half the salary of the water master, and the state paid the other half. We still have a water master now. The state runs the reservoir, but we still have a water master, and it's still on the same basis. We pay part of the distribution and the state pays part of it.

We didn't have to water our cattle on the home ranch, because there was a natural spring

here. They would just roam around. But there was a swamp in the pasture that was sort of treacherous. You could lose a cow in there because of the bog holes. But now the water table has fallen so much that they recently formed the underground water district here. They're in the process of trying to get some regulations going, and they're having their problems on the subject of pumping. We had artesian water here when they started pumping, and now, no more. Every year the water table's going down and down. Some places where they're pumping extensively, they're lifting water eighty feet, and with the cost of electricity.... There's a proclamation that came out that there will be no pumping until the middle of April and it is cut off in September or so. I think that's subject to litigation now.

I used to be concerned about Reno getting our water, but not any more, because we have enough people pumping water here now so that on nice windy days, Reno might get a vapor out of it. [laughter] By the time Reno comes over to take our water, I don't think there will be any more underground pumping water for anybody to fight about. That's the only good thing I can see. As I understand, there might be some water that gets into underground aquifers or basins. And there's different areas—there's an area they say up around Sierraville around Strang's ranch that these wells haven't affected yet. So that's a place where it could be someday subject to exploitation. It goes back to the old golden rule: he who has the gold, rules. [laughter]

I think there's going to have to be a change. This looks great out there right today: sprinklers are going and grass is growing, but I don't think that what they get for the hay and whatever they're growing is really worth the price we're paying. I can see an end to the water supply, and something's going to have to give. There's some surface water that's irrigated out of Frenchman reservoir, but that

will never increase, so that's going to limit the expansion there. And I certainly can't see how the pumping is going to increase.

The first contact that my family had with the agricultural extension agent was during the war, and I was Master of the Grange. My kids were three or four years old. A group of us thought, "Well, why the heck don't we get a 4-H started?"

The old-timers said, "Well, you've got to get a county agent or extension deal." We brought the thing up at the Grange, and one old guy said, "No, we don't want anything to do with those county agents." So again, you're bucking the old-timers. But anyway, a bunch of our kids came up who wanted to get involved. (Nine years old is when you start 4H.) I remember going before the Board of Supervisors. I was kind of a green guy down there telling them what they ought to do, and I thought, "Hell, they'll throw me out of here now." But, by God, they went along with it. We contacted some people over in Indian Valley and we got our group together. We got the farm advisor, Alton Young, who came down part-time from Lassen County. He was a heck of a good guy. That was our first contact with a county agent. We got our 4-H clubs going, and then he did come in to test different grasses and breeds of cattle. But it's so hard to get old ranchers to change.

Of course, cattle have gone through great changes, from the little compact baby-type. We had Herefords and Angus, and through 4-H we'd heard about Brahmas and improving feeds and feed rationing. We were raising these beef and sheep, and then we had warbles, which are a fly that lays eggs under the skin of livestock. So we got a spraying program to get rid of those things, along with different medicines like antibiotics.

I think ranches have benefitted from 4-H. I think some of the varieties of alfalfa

that farmers are growing and the different fertilizers have paid their way. Of course, sometimes they learn more from the farmers than the farmers learn from them. I'm for the farm advisory program, and as I say, I'm like one of these old guys, though; I don't go along with everything. They've come up this year and we put a little plot in using different fertilizers.

I don't think *my* ranch benefitted from 4-H, but I think it kept the people interested in agriculture, gardening, cooking, and everything in the program that came along. I'm real proud that I was part of the program. I see kids nowadays that are grown up and have kids of their own...they still remember when they used to come up and they had a cooking school. My wife was one of the leaders, and I was in beef or whatever they needed. The program's still going on and the town kids are still 4-H'ers.

In this country, the sawmills are having a problem with ashes. I think it's costing one mill in Quincy about \$150,000 a year to take this damn stuff out and bury it. They were happy to get rid of it, so they brought a bunch out here for testing and put it on different plots to see if it's good or bad for the ground. I can't see where there's any benefits, though, because it's wood ashes. I always figured they could just scatter that around.

When my son graduated from college in 1965, I think, we leased our neighbor's ranch and we bought all their cattle. We went to the PCA [Production Credit Association] and filled out their forms and had no problem then. I told my son, "Well, now you need a car and machinery, so just *load* me up." Of course, my ranch was clear then, so what the hell. So I said to the PCA, "Well, we want to borrow the money for the lease and the cattle, but we're not going to be able to make this cattle

payment next year." This was no problem. But then the year was up, and here came the threatening letters saying, "We can't just lend you money and help other people to go broke." They kept pressuring us about the deal, so we got out from under that darned quick. That's the only experience I ever had with them.

There was one thing that really bugged me about the PCA, and it was a common practice when you bought shares. You borrowed \$1,000 and they gave you \$900, but you're paying on \$1,000. My son had been to college and done a little work, and he said, "Actually, you mean we're paying one year's advance interest here. You're not giving us any shares."

The PCA said, "Oh, no." But that's what it was.

Since the 1950s, things haven't really changed in how I operate the ranch. I like to buy the best breeding bulls I can buy. I've run about the same amount of cattle, and it's made a profit—not a large one, but it pays all the bills. So there really hasn't been much change here.

I've never really expanded the ranch. I've got 325 acres that I can irrigate, and I've worked the ranch as efficiently as I could. In fact, I hired *very* little labor except in the summer months, and got a few breaks in the prices so the thing is paid for; I've had no problem. But it's a good question: "Why do it?" I guess it's a way of life. People can raise their family in kind of a family operation, working together. You just have to like it. But the economics are terrible.

The land has gotten pretty expensive. (I haven't bought any more land, and the only time I sold land was when they built the reservoir.) The Bony place in Sierraville brought around nine hundred dollars an acre in an estate sale. Don Giudici, the administrator of it, was Bony's uncle. It's not as

bad as you'd expect to pay in some other parts of the country, but other parts of the country you'd probably grow corn or soybeans. Here on an acre you could probably get it irrigated to two-ton an acre. Say you get \$175 a ton off of it that you sell, and you'd probably get some grazing off of it, so you make \$200 an acre. So that's your gross if you have to hay the thing, and you've got all of your other expenses, like a little water bill up there now, plus taxes. (Of course, some of them are under Williamson's Act, which gets a little better break.)

Every year I fertilize and run about the same amount of cattle. (I went into a fertilizer program that we didn't do before.) As far as feed supplements go, I always feel that if I have to buy supplements—unless it's extreme drought or something—I think it's a waste. If you can feed a cow on hay and grass here without going out and buying a bunch of protein blocks or whatever, then I don't think I want every dollar I get off of this ranch to go into something more.... I'm just rolling, spinning my wheels, really, to be running more cattle or whatever. I could probably go rent pasture and get more cows and have more work and hire help, but up until now I've handled things myself with no problem.

The only thing that I've changed now in my operation is that I'm not going to do any more winter feeding, due to the fact that I cannot handle the bales and plow the snow. I've gone into sort of a partnership with one young fellow who takes care of all of my cattle in the winter. I pasture them in the summer and he winters them, and then we split the expenses. So I don't worry a thing about cattle anymore. This year I'm going to cut my hay and put it up and sell it, because it's a good market for grass hay for horses. I've still got good machinery, and I feel that if that gets to be too much of a burden, I'll just lease the whole deal. My son hasn't shown any great

interest in the ranch. They like the country and everything else, but you can make a hell of a lot more money elsewhere.

Since the mid-1960s or early 1970s, it hasn't really been possible for us to make payments on the ranch and at the same time make a living off of the cattle. It goes back to the old saying that you should marry the rich farmer's daughter and have them donate the ranch to you. It takes so much capital to get into ranching! I feel sorry for the young people that want to get into ranching today. It's just not up there. Some ranchers are losing money, but they don't want to give it up.

I've got some grandkids that may be interested in ranching, but I'll probably be the last Dotta on this ranch. I remember here a few years ago, there wasn't a house anyplace you went. I'm glad I won't be here twenty years from now because I can just see houses. There's a golf course here, and they've already got a little tiny airport down here that will get bigger. Look at Reno: Kietzke Lane and Matley Lane used to be all ranches—potato growers, onions, dairies, everything. You drive through there once in a while and see an old fallen-down corral or something...some old guy still surviving, completely surrounded by houses and everything. That didn't take long. I noticed the other day when I was on McCarran that there's an old fallen-down fence and ranch house on El Rancho Drive. But it seems to me that every once in a while you look out there and say, "Well, here's where the old-timers were."

---

## LIFE IN THE VALLEY: RITA BRADLEY

On my mother's side, my grandfather, Alexander Guidici, came from Switzerland and was Swiss-Italian. I don't know when he came to Sierra Valley here; all I know is that he was on his ranch, the Last Chance ranch, before he married my grandmother. (The ranch is on the way to Frenchman Dam from Chilcoot.) My grandmother came into this valley and she was kind of like a maid. Grandfather met her, and then they settled on his dairy ranch. It must have been a hundred or some acres, and they might have acquired more pastureland up there at the Little Last Chance Creek. He had worked milking cows in Clover Valley before he came down there.

My grandfather and grandmother had six children. There was Uncle Fred; he stayed on the ranch. Then Uncle Alex had the ranch right next to it, which was called the Burgeret ranch. Uncle Chester married and was off the ranch. He stayed with his in-laws for a while and then he got his own place. My Aunt Frances went to college in Berkeley, I guess, and took up stenography. Then she came back to Sierra Valley and went to work in what was

then called the Sierra Valley Bank. My other aunt lived around here a little while, but then she and her husband moved to Richmond, California, and he painted Pullman cars for the railroad down there. My mother, Delia Guidici, married Dad, and that's when she left for Verdi. She was twenty-three. My grandmother wasn't too well, so my mother had done most of the cooking and work around the house.

My grandparents used to take their cows up to Frenchman Lake in the summer. They called it the Last Chance country at that time. They'd go up there and milk, and I think they left the milk up there to separate and then brought the cream back to the ranch. Then my grandfather made butter and cheese with the milk, and he threw what was left over to the hogs. Twice a year he used to take a wagonload of cheese and butter out to Reno or Virginia City, where he sold it. This was in the early 1900s when my mother was growing up. We didn't do anything like that when I was a little girl, though. He was just more or less retired as I remember him. Of course, that's

when the kids had grown up and they were doing most of the work.

My grandfather moved to Richmond, California, after he left the ranch. There, he bought a piece of property sight unseen. He figured that when he retired, he was going to Richmond and live. But when he got there, he found that the property was too close to the bay, so he made some kind of a trade. His new location wasn't much farther from the bay, but he built his home there, anyway.

Uncle Fred continued to run the Last Chance ranch after my grandfather retired. My uncle didn't do so much dairying; he mostly went into stock cattle. I guess he took the stock cattle up to Frenchman Lake during the summer. His son, Donald Guidici, still has the ranch.

I don't know much about my father's parents, but I think they were from Giornico, Switzerland. My father's name was Isaac Martinetti. He and his brother came to this country together around 1905. I don't know what my uncle did, but my father came in as a hydraulic miner at Sierra City. He later quit the hydraulic mining business and came into Sierra Valley with a lone white stallion to breed with mares; it was a Percheron stallion. (I have a picture of my father standing by the horse in 1913 at the Alfonso Ramelli ranch near Beckwourth, which used to be called Beckwith.) My father used to take his horse from ranch to ranch, and wherever night took over, he stayed at the ranch and then went on. I guess they would board his horse, too—he never did say. Everybody had work horses then. They had to do all their harvesting, haying, everything, with horses. Some of them had what they called buggy horses, which were smaller than work horses.

My father met my mother when he was taking his stallion around; they were married in 1913. After he married my mother, I believe

they went to Reno and lived for a year or so. I don't know what he did there, but they later left Reno and rented this little ranch at Verdi, Nevada. My parents' ranch in Verdi was small and it had apple trees. They sold apples, and they milked a few cows and made butter and sold it. Sometimes they didn't have a milker, and so my mother got to milking cows, too, besides doing the rest of the work. [laughter] That's the way they made their living.

They left Verdi after two years because they wanted to spread out and get something better...expand to a larger ranch. So they moved to Sierra Valley in 1916 when I was two. They came from Verdi by wagon over Dog Valley Road. I think the ranch they took up was about 640 acres or something. It's adjacent to the Strang ranch. As I remember my mother saying, they borrowed money from someone—I don't remember who that was—to buy the ranch. In 1924 when a forest fire burned most of the buildings except the house, this guy demanded his money. So they had to turn around and borrow money from the Federal Land Bank! Then they made payments to the land bank, and that's the way they paid the ranch.

Dad bought a little truck around 1920, after using the horse and buggy for travel until then. In about 1928 or 1929 my parents bought a passenger car to travel in, and we really liked that. Before, us kids rode in the back of the little truck on boxes, but we didn't mind. We visited my grandparents a couple times a year and we thought that was great.

Cars traveling on the road were mostly locals, not like today when there is a steady stream—especially in the summer and summer holidays—of fishermen, tourists and campers. As a child we had campers, but not many; we made a bed with pine boughs and pitched a tent. Now there are campgrounds and most everyone has camp trailers—much

more comfortable, all modern equipment. Airplanes would fly over the valley only once in a great while; it was a great thing to see one. Now we hear and see planes and helicopters all the time.

I had one brother and two sisters. The sister next to me was Elwina, and the next one was Dorothy. My brother's name is Elver. We always had little chores to do in the house. I think I was eleven years old when I started milking cows. My sister and I helped milk six or seven cows apiece, and we washed all the separators and stuff as we grew older. Later we milked about ten cows each. Then we got to cleaning the barn every day and pushing hay out to the cattle and taking care of the baby calves. You had to shovel the barn every day, especially in the winter months, when you had the cows staying inside more than in the summer months. The barn had to be cleaned. I did all kinds of things! [laughter] My brother didn't like milking cows, so he'd do other chores. [laughter] (He lives on the ranch now, but I don't know what will happen after he gives it up, because his two sons are loggers.)

I suppose my father had a few head of cattle in Verdi and brought them out here and maybe he purchased some more, I don't know. But whoever he bought the ranch from had some cows—I think mostly they were Durhams. Then as time went on Dad changed to Guernseys, and in later years he was into the brown Swiss. Afterwards, he had Herefords for a long time. My dad milked forty-five or fifty cows each day, but he had some hired help, too. When it was haying time, my mother cooked for ten, eleven men, and they all worked in the hay field. But now, only one man goes out and does the whole thing. [laughter]

If my dad needed any extra help, I guess he hired them if he had to, but mostly he

just needed a milker to help him milk. The milker came from Switzerland, and he didn't talk anything but Swiss [the Swiss-Italian dialect], so that's all our whole family talked. When I went to school I didn't know anything but Swiss, but gradually, as we didn't have any more Swiss milkers to talk to and my folks didn't have anybody else to talk to, we just talked the American language. I can understand a lot of the Swiss language, but I can't talk it any more. It was getting so my mother and aunt said it was hard for them to talk it, because by not being around it, you don't keep up on it.

Dad did most of the irrigating on the ranch himself. Behind the ranch there was a natural spring; that's where they got their water for the house. The water still flows from that spring. Dad piped water to the milk house, where he put a water wheel up in the late 1930s to run the separator to separate the cream from the milk. Before that you turned it with a crank by hand. We also had a steam boiler to heat the water for washing all the milking utensils. In 1940 Dad purchased a milking machine to milk the cows.

H. F. Turner had the Sattley garage. He had a mechanic there and he also ran the Sattley store and post office. There used to be a blacksmith shop in Sattley just across from the store. It stopped operating in the 1930s. We went to school up here on the hill behind Sattley. The schoolhouse is still standing, but it's remodeled into a home now.

I guess we were the only Swiss-Italian kids in this area. There were more Swiss-Italians out in the middle of the valley in Vinton, Chilcoot, and Beckwourth. Our neighbors were the Churches and the Turners and the Strangs. The Strangs came here from New England; so did the Turners and Churches. In later years there was also another nearby family: the large Biaggi family, who I guess

were Italian. We got along fine with our neighbors. Whenever my father had any work to do, the neighbors came over and helped him and he helped them. They got along, and if the neighbors helped my father, my mother did the cooking and fed them all, and then the same way with the others. That's the way it worked. They always helped each other.

Harry Turner had a sawmill business. I think it was called Sunset Mill. They put a portable sawmill right up in back of our ranch, and they logged and brought the timber down and sawed it up for lumber. I think the sawmill was run by a Caterpillar, but they snaked the logs in off the hill with horses.

In 1931 or 1932 Dad bought a big ton-and-a-half truck and started hauling more with it, including animals, so we were all proud of that. In the late 1930s a John Deere tractor was purchased. It was used to pull a hay wagon full of hay, and we sawed wood with its power take-off, and did many more things on the ranch. We used a crosscut saw to cut wood to burn in the stoves; then there was a drag saw run by a gas engine to cut the logs, and Dad got a circular saw run by a gas engine to cut limbs. The blacksmith shop on the ranch was used all the time. We used to love to watch them get the irons hot, then hammer on them and bend them or whatever to be used for repairing equipment.

We used kerosene lamps and I used to enjoy watching my mother taking the lamps down, cleaning them, trimming the wicks and filling the lamps with kerosene. We also used candles to go to bed with. There was no telephone in our home. When electricity came into the valley in 1939, that was a big thing. A new item in the house was the radio, which was powered by electricity. Sometimes in evenings us girls and my mother did fancy work while listening to the radio. The first T.V. in my home was not bought until the

1950s. My mother was living with us and she purchased it.

For entertainment at home, card games were played or we sat and played the phonograph, as it was called then. One Swiss milker played the accordion, and we all enjoyed that. The little school gave programs in which all children participated, and we had refreshments after. On several occasions, there were programs and dancing above the old blacksmith shop. Somewhere every Saturday night there was a dance, and I remember people going, but as we grew up, dancing wasn't so popular, so we never went to many dances.

A large residence was made into a hospital in Loyalton, but we never had too many doctors. Most of the time a nurse lived in Sierraville and she took care of the sick and made house calls. She was also the one that took care of children when born—a midwife, she was called.

I don't remember anyone finding any Indian artifacts around here, but further over towards Sierraville there were some along the road from the rodeo grounds. On one ranch on the end of the road, they've got some of these big mortars in their backyard. I don't remember seeing anything like that over there at the ranch, but people have found arrowheads up on the hill.

I don't have any memories of any Indians living here, but my mother talks about seeing them over there on the northeast side of the valley. She said that they used to go up there and fish on Last Chance Creek. The creek comes in this side of Vinton at the Taylor-O'Malley ranch and goes in at the highway and on up. The Indians would come into the ranch and they'd see them. My mother didn't tell me much except where they lived, but it seemed to me most of the Indians lived in

Loyalton, so they probably lived in Loyalton and then went up there fishing. That's all I remember my mother saying about them.

I went to high school in Sierraville for two years and then we had to go to Loyalton. About that time, my mother didn't seem to think I should go in to Loyalton, so she talked to Uncle Marcel's aunt and uncle. That's how I ended up leaving the ranch and going to school in Reno for two years. In Reno I lived with my uncle's aunt, Ella Norton, and her husband, Pat. He was a railroad section man for the V & T. The railroad went right by their house, which was on Pine Street in Reno.

When I graduated, I came back to the ranch and did the same things I had always done. Then the Sattley grocery store came up for sale. It had been run by the Swigards since my folks came here in 1916. Mr. Swigard sold harness and haying equipment—anything that people needed on the ranches. But he closed the store, so Willard Church came along and opened it up again. He stayed a year, and then he wanted to get out, so he talked my folks into buying it from the Swigards, who still owned it. So they decided to buy the store for us three girls in 1941. My folks also bought the house near the store from the Swigards. One of my sisters lived in the house for a while, and then another sister lived in it until they both left to get married. Then I moved in. [laughter] I started running the store by myself around 1945 or 1946. By then it was *also* the local post office. I ended up renting the house to some people that had brought cattle here for the summer. You see, ranchers in the valley used to have mostly dairy cows, but by the time I had the store, they were mostly going in to stock cattle. Some people, like from the Marysville area, drove cattle into this valley and rented pasture for the summer.

I married Harry Bradley in 1943. The first time I met him was when he was working for Mr. James Cavitt, who had the ranch over here. That was about 1928. We kind of drifted apart because he was one of those lower country cowmen that came into the valley, and when the snow got so deep, they left. [laughter] When we got married, he stayed, but he didn't help run the store because he was a cowman. [laughter] By 1945, we got three different pieces of property and we got into beef cattle ranching. My husband also had a few milk cows left, and he milked a few for a little while and then finally quit.

I continued to run the store and was the postmaster for the area. I had a neighbor up the road whose husband worked for the county, and she helped me run the store. They didn't have too much money because he spent a lot foolishly, so she liked to do some work. She liked working there, so through the years I got her to take my place while I was gone to the hospital having my kids. Later, some people by the name of Bagley bought the store from us, and they stayed there two years. Then in 1978 the government pulled the post office out of the store and moved into another building.

My kids kind of grew up in the store: they went back and forth a lot between the house and the store. My son, David, left the valley when he grew up. He drives a cattle truck and has a few cattle. He lives in Roseville right now. David comes back in the summer months— he's in and out. He brings cattle in here. When he's not driving a cattle truck he's driving a logging truck. He will wear himself out in that truck business! [laughter]

My oldest daughter still lives with us. She's had kind of a background of being epileptic, and right now she's helping a family in Loyalton. My other daughter lives four miles down the road, so two of my kids are still in the valley.

The biggest change that I have seen through the years is that everybody went out of the dairy business and most of them went into the cattle business. Of course, another change occurred right here in Sattley: we had a sawmill that closed down four or five years ago; it had operated on and off. Sometimes it'd close and then it would open up again. But when it would be closed, it affected the store because the mill workers had supported the store some.

---

## THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE VALLEY: ARTIE STRANG

The first man that I know of who was in charge of the Forest Service in this area was a man by the name of Charlie Copren, who came in 1909. The next Forest Service ranger was a man by the name of Babbitt. He used to buy milk from my dad. (I remember going along with my dad when he'd take milk over to a cheese factory in Sierraville. He'd dip some milk out of a can and put it in a quart jar to sell to Mr. Babbitt.) There's a place above Loyaltown called Babbitt Lookout. There's a big peak up there. Then there's a Babbitt ranger station, and there's three peaks in there named Babbitt. I can't remember him much; all I know was that his wife was Indian. I don't know where they came from.

The Forest Service station was built in 1908 on a forty-acre piece of land right next to my property. The people who had originally owned that land woke up one morning and there was a big tent out there. They were supposed to give the Forest Service a right-of-way, but they wouldn't because they thought that they owned the land. But Charlie Bonta gave the Forest Service a right-of-way from

Route 49 up to where it goes over by the Madelina ranch. He gave them the road, *providing* they gave his son, Charlie, Jr., a lifetime job with the Forest Service. Charlie, Jr., stayed with the Forest Service from the time they built that ranger station in 1908 until 1922. If he'd have stayed a little longer, he would have gotten a pension, but he didn't. About 1918, they built a nice house for the ranger, a barn for his horses, and a wood shed. In those days, all that was done by pack horses or pack mules.

A ranger named Walton was the ranger in the old station, back about 1915 or 1916. His wife left him, supposedly because she didn't like living in this isolated country, and in remorse he went out to the woodshed and killed himself with a shotgun blast in the mouth. He left a note for his wife saying something like, "It's hard to die, but here goes, old kid!" After several days passed and he hadn't been seen, some people went out looking for him and found the corpse. My dad helped bring the body in, and he said it was so decomposed by then that they had

difficulty picking it up. No rangers would stay at that station after that because Walton's ghost scared them away. So the Forest Service moved into Sierraville after that.

After the Forest Service moved to Sierraville, they had two or three places that they were housed. They had the ranger station in an old hotel. Then for a long time they had another one in back of where Jerry McCaffery is. Then they had the office at the ranger's place in Sierraville; he operated the station out of his barn. (He used to take care of the whole district with *one* old, gray saddle mare.) About 1932, during the Depression, they bought land in Sierraville from a man named Miller and opened up a new office. They're still located there on Highway 89 just south of town.

After the Forest Service opened their new ranger station in 1932, there weren't any policy changes that affected us locals. There might have been with the people that owned timberland up in the hills, though. But the Forest Service got so doggone *big*—us little ranchers around here don't mean much to them. See, now they've got forty or fifty people up there at that service station where the old guy used to do it all by himself.

Some individuals haven't gotten along with the Forest Service. When the Forest Service came in here, they wouldn't let you start a fire; you've got to have a permit right today. I can't set a fire right around here without a permit, but I can cross that road—which is their boundary—and have a nice, big fire, and they can't do anything about it. One rancher named Turner was burning up there right next to the snow one time. The fire couldn't go anywhere because the bank of snow wasn't more than 100 feet away from it. Well, it got over on the Forest Service side, and they were going to make Turner pay for the

whole thing. They had quite a bit of trouble about it.

One cold morning quite a few years ago, my neighbor set a pitch stump afire to warm himself. The stump burned clear down, and there's a big hole in the ground. So about three o'clock the ranger came over and said, "I want you to go up and take a look at that fire up there."

I said, "*Well*, what's been keeping you? I expected you early this morning."

He said, "What happened?"

I knew, but I wasn't going to tell him; I wasn't going to turn my neighbor in. I told him I didn't know how the fire got started, and that I didn't see the man set it. I said, "Mister, I just don't know how it got started, but it's all out now. I just got through irrigating there a week ago, so it couldn't do much damage, anyway." So that's just the way it goes. These fellows are just busy-bodies. They just want to work to kind of keep their own self little higher. But I think the people around here would benefit from more burning.

As far as firefighting goes, the Forest Service takes care of them very nicely. I'm going to say they control 90 percent of the fires. Of course, when these big fires get away, there's nothing that any man can do. They just simply burn themselves out. They have their own trucks with pumping outfits on, and they come and they work; they work on private property.

In 1924 when we had a big fire here, we had a big stump out in the front yard that we let burn. We'd taken care of everything: we saved the barn and the whole ranch, but this old guy, Land, came up, and he just gave us nine kinds of heck that we let that stump burn! It wasn't doing any damage to let it burn, and my dad wanted to get it out of there, anyway.

Actually, when they had the big fire in 1924, the Forest Service was one heck of a lot

of help here. They had water pumps and they brought out hundreds and hundreds of feet of hoses and left them around for people to use. If it hadn't been for them and that pump, we wouldn't have that big barn that's here; it would have burned. They left some hose off here and we just put this big water wheel down this hill—a four-inch pipe and everything. We had quite a bit of pressure. We had two hoses that were an inch-and-a-half and they'd both be running the same amount of water. So we dragged them all around here and irrigated that upper barn and everything else we could reach. We had the garden hoses for the house, and everything was wet down.

When the fire got loose on the seventh of July, it went out all over this country here. We got all the water that we could get out of that creek. Above the ranch house here was a ditch about six feet in width and two feet deep. They had these pumps in there and that's how we hosed the barn down. I don't know how many thousand feet of hose they had—it must have been two thousand feet. The water pumps operated like a chain saw. They had an internal combustion engine. There was a mechanic that we brought up from Nevada City, and wherever those pumps went, he went.

Around four o'clock the day the fire started, the wind had come up. The fire went over past the upper back of that hill, and there were big fir trees up there with dead tops. I don't know how high they were, but I'm going to say they were a hundred feet high. When they were burning, you couldn't see the tops of the trees because the blaze went that high. We had a barn out on the point of a hill with a little hay in it, and one little fire got started in the corral. Nobody was around, but finally, one man went down there and found it. He covered it up, and then my brother and I worked on each side of that barn. We each put

out fifty fires. Our neighbor lost everything except his house, but the Forest Service helped him as much as they could. Twenty houses burned up there in one day...houses and barns and outbuildings.

I hunted all over this country for years until my legs gave out on me, but there were never any restrictions that I know of. When the deer season first came on, the Forest Service did have something to say about the killing of deer on their land. Today, if you kill a buck and you've got your tags on that deer, you can go to the Forest Service and have it validated. I don't know what other restrictions they've got, but you can either go there to get it, or you can get it from the sheriff or his deputy. See, those tags have got to be validated, and your tag and the tag that's on the deer have got to correspond, and you're also supposed to tell them where you killed the deer.

There has been a complaint around here that the deer are becoming too numerous and that they're grazing too much. Over here a fellow has complained a little bit about the deer coming down and eating his grass and hay. Some people say the deer are getting too thick or are damaging the trees and the forest and things like that. Well, I can't agree with that. I don't know whether the Forest Service had anything to do with it. Now, the Fish and Game Commission is the one that really governs the deer hunting. They've got this all fixed up in zones, and when you apply for a license, you've got to pick your zone or they'll assign you to one. That's a big conflict.

About 1956 or 1957, they had what they called an antler-less deer hunt: you could kill does and fawns. They had this hunt three times because they figured the deer were too numerous. One time, my wife and I and two other people were going to Reno just a little

after sundown. From the time we left the turn at Sierraville until we got out to highway 395, we counted a *thousand* deer. After they had those three doe hunts, you could make that trip a thousand times and you couldn't count a thousand deer. But now they're coming back again.

One time when they were having a doe hunt, we met over at Downieville. Boy, I made a good talk on the subject. There was a fellow nicknamed Meatball who ran the hotel and bar there, and he was for the doe hunt. Another fellow had come down and given me a cigar. I said, "I don't smoke," but I took the cigar, anyway. I gave the cigar to Meatball and said, "Here, Meatball, have one on the does!"

Two or three years ago they tried to have another doe hunt in Calpine, but we voted it down. Last year they came in here with helicopters and everything, and they marked up and put beepers and everything on the does and bucks to try to monitor them a little more closely.

We have gotten along very well with the loggers that use Forest Service land. In the middle of the township they took a section, and they called that the school section. (The center of every township across the whole United States is supposed to be a school section, a place to build the school.) Well, it happened to be that the middle of this township is right up here by this bald spot, section sixteen. It's right out behind this ranch. A man by the name of Copren, brother to the forest ranger, somehow got ahold of this school section.

Around 1940 sometime, a logging outfit and mill run by two men by the name of Mason and Hager bought the ground. They wanted to come out here with a logging road, and they wanted to know what my dad would charge them. At that time it was about fifty

cents a thousand. My dad said, "If you give me the first chance of buying that ground up there, you can come in free." So when they came in, they gave my dad that whole school section with only 2 percent of the fir timber sold off of it, and he got it for *forty-four hundred dollars*! Oh, he made a clean one, I'll tell you. Then the David Johnson Lumber Company logged out here, and I don't know what my dad got from it, or if he got anything!

Logging didn't come into the area until Charlie Campbell came here. He was the first man around this country to log. We used to call the loggers Gypos. I don't know where the expression came from, but they just called them Gypos. Now all the logging is done by contractors. They go to the mill and find out how much they can get for a thousand foot of fir logs dumped in the pond, and if they can get enough for it, they'll try it. A lot of fellows make agreements, but they just can't make it; they go broke. That's the way all logging is done now. Sierra Pacific owns a mill around here, and they have their own trucks. They go and get the best timber and leave the poor timber for the other poor devils. Loyaltan had a big lumberyard at one time; Calpine had a big one, too.

The Forest Service doesn't check up on cutting permits too much. One time the railroad company wanted the Forest Service to check on the trees if anybody stole them. (Our ranch is surrounded on two sides by the railroad because the government gave every other section for fifty miles to the railroad.) Well, a fellow went up there cutting trees on my dad, and stole them. But instead of going after the man that cut them, the Forest Service came to my dad, because my dad had money. So they made him pay about \$150 for those trees, I think. That's one way that the Forest Service controlled the timber.

The Forest Service is selling the wood that's cut out there for five dollars a cord. One thing about the Forest Service is you've got to go and do bids. If there's timber up there, they'll let it out for bid. They'll put a floor on the price that they've got to have. Then anybody else that wants to can bid on top of that. The only thing the Forest Service has done for people is they let them go up and cut their Christmas trees. That's the only thing that I can say.

I'm eighty-six years old now, and taken on the whole with me, the Forest Service has been a very poor neighbor. All those Forest Service guys said they could walk all over everybody, and you had to like it! For example, they wouldn't keep the fence maintained up where the station was, but if any cattle ever got in there, they'd squawk like heck!

We didn't graze our cattle on Forest Service land. If you did, they'd catch you and make you pay for it or sign a use permit. My dad tore down one fence and put a fence strip on the south line of his property. He followed the line pretty well until he got up there by the Forest Service land where there was a logging road that went off. His property line went right up the logging road, and I guess maybe he got two or three acres up there of Forest Service land. That land wasn't worth a darn to the Forest Service, but the ranger got ahold of him and made him sign a use permit. I guess that fence is still in there, but they never have come to me about it.

When we ran our cattle up to Gold Lake in 1918, there was no brush or trees up there. The cattle were able to run out there almost anywhere. But today, you get in your car and you drive up to Bassett's and those trees are so thick there that a jackrabbit can hardly get through them. The Forest Service says they're protecting the trees. Well, *maybe* they're protecting them, but those trees are growing

so thick that they're going to die. I've got land up here where the young trees are dying on me because they're too thick. I've got a man up here now thinning them out, and I'm getting fifteen dollars a cord out of it. I don't know how much he's taking that I don't hear about, but....

The Forest Service has come along and renamed some of these valleys. See, there's Coburn Meadows. That's where the big springs are back there. Berry Creek comes out of it. Then there's Coburn Lake, which is really the headwaters of that creek. You go right over the ridge and go down into what we used to call Coburn Valley when I was a kid, but the Forest Service has renamed it Maiden Valley. Maiden Valley was a little valley up over the hill a-ways from it.

Forest Service employees have made a small economic impact on the area. I guess probably they've spent a little money at the store, the bar, and restaurants. I don't know how many families they've got there, but there's a lot of those people living there who don't live on the station. They rent cabins at the Forest Service station, and they're not cheap, either. Some retired employees have bought homes right around here.



---

## THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE VALLEY:

### FRANK DOTTA

My family was here before the Forest Service. I remember when there would be one district ranger who would run the whole forest, the cattle, and the timber. The first forest ranger was a fellow by the name of Ben Beard, and we met once a year. He'd come down in the spring to meet with the permittees of the forest [ranchers with permits to graze cattle on Forest Service land], and that hasn't changed much. He would come down and say, "Well, what do you boys need?"

The old cowboys would sit around and say, "Well, we ought to have a cattle guard up there; ought to dig that spring out; put a drift fence up there..." so he'd write that all down.

"Well, I'll tell you boys, we just haven't got it in the budget this year, but..." The next year the same old deal: "Well, we did put in a quarter mile of drift fence up there. Now, next year we're going to try to get that spring up there."

We used to talk to our man in the Forest Service, but now you have to deal with a lot of people. When I talked to them about a fence recently, there was the district ranger,

an archaeologist, an environmentalist, then the farm advisor's office, the grazing man, and I, the permittee. That's a pretty large group. Things were simpler when you dealt with only one person.

I've always gotten along with the Forest Service, but it's getting like everything else: overloaded. You don't talk to the ranger now. They've holed up one area up above Frenchman reservoir that they wanted to raise ducks in. They wanted to fence that out until July so the baby ducks would be fine. Then you get the Fish and Game people involved with all the money they've got. They've got to blow it somewhere, so they say, "We've got to build a fence." So they build a fence and turn it over to the Forest Service, but it's not where they want it, so pretty soon there's cows roaming into the creek.

I haven't had much of a problem with the Forest Service, but they come and they hire a lot of people that have a degree. They come out of school and they read it all in the book! ..."The grass should be that high, measure that, and that's 30 percent utilization, and...."

They don't look at the whole picture. They've looked at a book and it turns out somebody wrote this article for Florida and it doesn't apply to us at all! The people that will come in and listen and discuss this thing with you can be learned from. But it's when these hotshot kids come out thinking that because they've read this, they know what's good and what's bad...! I think that's what the problem is. I don't know whether they respect age or not, but I always tell them that my people were here a hundred years ago. I tell them that I think we're running more cattle here now and the land looks as good as it did then. They begin to listen to those things a little bit, most of them.

One time they came in and told me that I had to move cattle because we were out of feed. I said, "Let's just jump in the pick-up and we'll take a little ride." So I took them down there where the feed was.

They said, "What about this?"

The cattle hadn't been in there and I said, "Well, it seems to be ample here."

They said, "Yes." [laughter] But I haven't really had too serious a problem with them.

Most of the land I graze my cattle on is Forest Service land now. But I own some of the property under the reservoir deal. The state took that away and they traded it to the Forest Service, and some of their policies concerning use of their land have changed over the years, but I haven't had much problem. Some people do have problems, but I haven't really had a problem with them. One thing I try to do is keep ahead of them a little bit. They permit so many cattle and maybe I'll keep just a few less, or maybe I'll move out, because it costs me money to keep them there. So I've had *good* relations with them. It's generally when somebody tries to get the edge on it that trouble occurs, because there's too damn many of them to fight.

Before Frenchman reservoir was built in 1965, there was just natural runoff of the streams. You had wet years, you had dry years, and sometimes you had water until June. Sometimes you didn't have water in February, and it came in a big flood all over and then it would dry up.

In the 1940s, there were some farmers and ranchers here in the valley who wanted to dam Frenchman Creek. They were using water out of the Little Last Chance Creek, and we had talked of building a small reservoir on Frenchman Creek. Marvin Humphrey was sort of the head of the group that was organized. He had put in some work there, and he had even checked on prices of land. I'm sure of that, because I owned some of the property that would have been involved there. We had an informal meeting at the Grange Hall, and we sort of agreed on twenty-five dollars an acre or something for land. Most of the group were in favor of going ahead, but the minority shot the thing down. I can't recall just why, but there was no way of making any headway.

Back then, nobody really had private water storage facilities. There was one place here in the valley called East Lake. It was about 150 acre-feet of water that was caught from runoff, but it was more of a water hole for cattle and that kind of thing than a reservoir. No one used it for irrigation. When people irrigated, they called it wild flooding. The creek on this end comes out of the Little Last Chance Creek and then divides; there's an east branch and a north branch. The ranchers had their dams in there and turnouts. It was nothing elaborate—just boards. In fact, they were rock dams with a border over there and flash boards.

I had the misfortune of sitting [owning land] where the dam went to create the Frenchman reservoir, so I lost that land. The

state of California offered us eighteen dollars an acre for it, so we weren't going to get rich. One thing I learned from the experience: if you ever get in trouble, go find the best legal advice that you can— don't try to find bargain legal advice. My neighbors had some old friend who was a legal eagle, but I think he liked to drink booze more than read law, so we didn't come out too good on the deal. I think we ended up with twenty-five or thirty-five dollars an acre.

As it turned out, if we hadn't had adjudicated rights when Frenchman reservoir was built, we'd have been dead ducks in the water. We would have had no right to the water, and we'd have had a *war*. But being that it was the court that created it, we still got our vested rights and priorities in the dam. So far, nobody can take them away—probably the federal government could someday, but right now we have a certain right into the waters at the Frenchman reservoir. With the construction of the reservoir, the whole water set-up changed, because we had some control then. We could take it when we needed it from the reservoir and get a lot more good out of it.

In order to build the reservoir, they took a lot of private land and land that we'd leased for the dam site. They had to have a perimeter around that; in fact, it came clear on up by our summer range. Then we had some problems of jockeying around and trying to get our cattle in there, and we had to build some fencing off of the reservoir area where they were working. Fred Galeppi, who was one of the largest landowners on the east side of the lake, just gave up in disgust. In fact, I'd like to quote what he said one day. We were up there and they were deciding about leases and getting land back, and we were standing right there where Frenchman Dam is standing now. They were taking the land at the time,

and we had a man from the state who was an appraiser or something there. Old Fred came up and told this fellow, "We shouldn't be singing the 'Star Spangled Banner' anymore." The fellow kind of looked at him, and Fred said, "It's not the land of the free or the home of the brave." I'll never forget that. There was old Fred; he was older than I am right now and he had been here all his life and could see what was happening. He was *banished* from his own land, so he just quit coming up here.

After the dam was built, the state of California traded some of this land with the Forest Service so that it would work out better for them. In my case, I was one of the stubborn guys. I fought with the state of California and leased some of my own land back for grazing. I kind of got myself grandfathered back in. The Forest Service had said no more cattle into the reservoir area; they put a big fence around it. Again, I just sort of stayed with them, and I ended up so that I do have grazing in the reservoir area. It was probably about 1965 or so that they started letting me put thirty more cattle in and fooling around. Now I have a permit that I can bring 116 head up here, so my cattle-running is in pretty good shape. I imagine that the day that I no longer come up here, it will be the end of grazing cattle in this area.

The reservoir has been good for the area, but I'm going to add one thing to show that whenever you do something, you change something else. One of the things that happened when we had the yearly runoff and floods was the old brown water was full of sediments. We never worried a thing about fertilizer because we had new soil, especially around the creek when the new soil was lush. Then we built the reservoir, stopped the water, and then took it out later. As a result, these meadows were only growing four inches high, so we had to go put fertilizer on the deal. So

it just shows what nature's balance is—that when you do something, you're going to hurt something else.

But the water as it is now is really great. They increased production and we have better control. Here at my place, I just grow native hay. If we get enough water after the hay's cut, we might get some more irrigation and green everything up at one time. So we've increased production that way, and it's more dependable, too. Now, we've had dry years, like last year. But this system still helped even last year, which was a real drought year. We ended up having some water that we would have not had in the normal pre-reservoir days when the water would have been gone in February.

---

## THE FOREST SERVICE AND THE VALLEY: RITA BRADLEY

There was a fire that burned all the buildings on the nearby ranches on July 4, 1924. They assumed it was started by a campfire, but they really never knew, I guess. When the fire broke out, my mother and us kids were in the house alone. She had set the table for the hay crew to come in and eat. Then somebody from Sattley came over and took us out. We went up to the Turner house and the fire was blazing on the hill; it looked like it was coming right over the top. It was scattered all over—there was fire all over. There was no volunteer fire department then; that probably wasn't started until the early 1930s, so everybody just relied on the U.S. Forest Service. The fire kept burning, and the Forest Service men in those times only had picks and shovels to try to fight it. They had brought a pump to pump water from the creek, but it didn't work.

My dad and the hay crew decided to help fight the fire. They had a big wind come up and they had to get out of there. It got to be too much for them; they had to run for their lives. The wind blew sparks down to the ranch,

and by the time they got back, the buildings were on fire. I guess the attic in the house was burning, but they had a bucket brigade from the creek to the house. Someone said they don't know how Gifford Webber got up in the attic to be the last man on the bucket brigade; he had climbed up and found a way in. He was a rancher from Sierraville. The rest of the buildings all burned down; it was quite a shock and a mess. The hogs were running around half burned and the cows wanted to get into the barn because they were used to being in there. They were walking on hot ashes and got their feet burned. (After the fire, they had to fight with the cows to get them used to being milked outside the corral—they had to tie them up. It was quite a job, as I remember. [laughter])

The fire kind of threatened the Strang ranch, too, but they saved the buildings there. But it sure took my folks' place. My mother claimed that the cinders even burned the bridges out that crossed the creek. It also burned all the wagons and rakes and stuff. After that fire in July, I guess they just rebuilt

the barn that fall. A fellow by the name of Amos Hathaway, who was a carpenter in Loyalton, built the barn. Everybody helped.

Whenever I had any business with the Forest Service, I got along with them; whenever I asked for a permit, I always got my permit. I never had any problems. I don't remember that my father had any problems with the Forest Service, either. Some people say, "Well, they're too strict..." But I guess they have to be strict to keep the fires from getting out of control!

---

## ORIGINAL INDEX: FOR REFERENCE ONLY

In order to standardize the design of all UNOHP transcripts for the online database, they have been reformatted, a process that was completed in early 2012. This document may therefore differ in appearance and pagination from earlier printed versions. Rather than compile entirely new indexes for each volume, the UNOHP has made each transcript fully searchable electronically. If a previous version of this volume existed, its original index has been appended to this document for reference only. A link to the entire catalog can be found online at <http://oralhistory.unr.edu/>.

## B

Babbitt, Mr., 79  
Banks, George, 17-18  
Beard, Ben, 91-92  
Beckwourth, James P., 3  
Bonta, Charlie, Jr., 80  
Bonta, Charlie, Sr., 80  
Bradley, Harry, 76  
Bradley, Rita (née Martinetti): ancestors/family, 67-72, 73-74, 75; childhood/youth, 70-76; education, 75; employment, 76, 77; and family ranch operation, 67-68, 69-70, 71-72, 73, 75-76, 77-78; marriage/family, 76, 77

## C

Calpine, California, 28-29  
Campbell, C. F., 31  
Cattle industry, 5-6, 17-20, 24-25, 26-28, 29-30, 42, 47-48, 49, 60. *See also* Dairy industry  
Cooperative Extension service, 29-30, 60-61  
Copren, Charlie, 79

## D

Dairy industry, 7-8, 10-11, 12, 14, 24-25, 36, 37-39, 40-42, 46, 47-48, 49, 68.  
*See also* Cattle industry  
Depression, U.S., 25-26  
Dotta, Claudina (née Ponci), 35, 37, 47-48

FOR REFERENCE ONLY

Dotta, Frank: ancestors/  
family, 35-40, 47, 48;  
childhood/youth, 37-48;  
and family ranch opera-  
tion, 36-43, 45-50, 51-  
54, 58, 61-64; marriage/  
family, 50, 60

Dotta, Lodovico, 36-37,  
38, 39

Dotta summer range, 45-47

## F

Federal Land Bank, 25-26,  
48-49

Flint, Mr., 7

4-H, 29-30, 60-61

Frenchman reservoir, 94-  
97

## G

Galeppi, Fred, 95-96

Guidici, Alexander, 67,  
68-69

Guidici, Delia, 68, 69-70

Guidici, Frances, 68

Guidici, Fred, 69

## H

Hamlin, Mr., 7

Hammer, Armand, 55

Healds Business College  
(Sacramento), 20-21

Humphrey, Frank, 56  
Humphrey, Marvin, 94

## J

Jopson, Les, 57

## L

Leichty, Dan, 11-12

## M

Martinetti, Elver, 71

Martinetti, Isaac, 69-70,  
71-72, 73

## N

Nichols, Albert, 17-18

## O

Ostinni, Mike, 15-16

## P

Pabst, Bill, 51-52

Production Credit Associa-  
tion (PCA), 61-62

## R

Ramelli, Mr., 36-37  
Ranching, 13-14, 17-20,  
24-28, 29-30, 32-33, 36-  
43, 45-50, 51-54, 58, 61-  
64, 67-68, 69-70, 71-72,  
73, 75-76, 77-78  
Ranching, corporate, 54-55  
Randolph Water Company  
(Sierraville, California),  
12-13

## S

Scarlet, Art, 30  
Selvege, Eugene, 54  
Sierra Valley (California):  
ethnic groups in, 10-11,  
35, 42, 43-45, 72-73, 74-  
75; logging in, 28-29,  
46-47; ranching in, 13-  
14, 17-20, 24-28, 29-30,  
32-33, 36-43, 45-50, 51-  
54, 58, 61-64, 67-68, 69-  
70, 71-72, 73, 75-76, 77-  
78; water rights/use in,  
55-59, 94-97  
Stewart, Louis, 2  
Stewart (Louis) family, 2  
Strang, Arthur (father), 9,  
13-15, 16-17, 19-20, 24-  
25, 26, 32  
Strang, Artie: ancestors/  
family, 1-10, 13-15, 16-  
17, 19-20, 24-26, 32;  
childhood/youth, 11-12,

14-15, 19-20; education,  
20-21; employment, 21-  
22, 23-24; and family  
ranch operation, 13-14,  
17-20, 24-28, 29-30, 32-  
33; marriage/family, 26,  
33

Strang, Jared, 3-9, 10  
Strang, Nathaniel, 2-3  
Swigard family (Sattley,  
California), 75-76

## U

U.S. Fish and Game  
Commission, 84-85, 92  
U.S. Forest Service, 79-  
101; and firefighting, 81-  
84, 99-100; and grazing,  
87-88, 93, 95-96; and  
logging, 85-87

## W

Walton, Mr., 80  
Water rights/use, 55-59,  
94-97  
Webber, Gifford, 100  
White, Dave, 12  
World War II, 51-54

## Y

Young, Alton, 60

